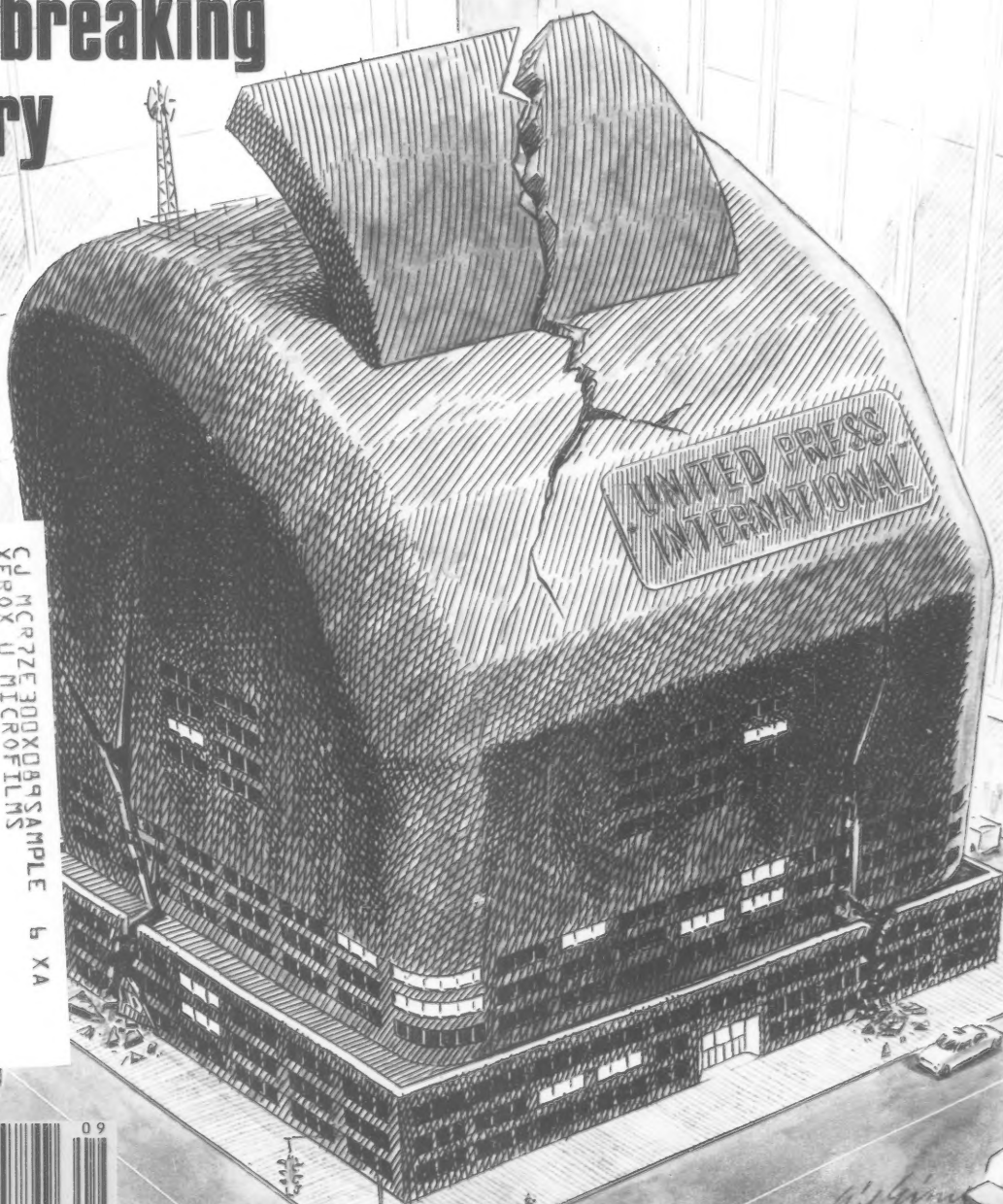


COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1985 • \$2.50
NATIONAL MEDIA MONITOR • PRESS/RADIO/TV

UPI: the breaking story

- Packing 'em In
With Action News
- Keeping 'em Happy
In Flint



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09

More pressure on Nicaragua, and more potential for controversy

The campaign of mili- to secure a foothold on the jungle flanks of

A.R.D.E. guerrillas leave their base camp near the San Juan River. In Right: the San Juan del Rio.

...a couple times a Soviet machine gun

A rounded contour, hit by a Brazilian chopster

... ..

eventually get close enough from the bottle.

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“the clear winner...”

This year, TIME Magazine was presented with three of the most coveted awards in our profession.

Each of them is an honor. Together they form a remarkable tribute to the consistent quality for which we strive.

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Presented to TIME for general excellence in achieving its editorial objectives in the category of magazines with over one million circulation.

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Columbia Journalism Review (ISSN 0010-194X) is published bimonthly under the auspices of the faculty, alumni, and friends of the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University. Volume XXIV, Number 3, September/October 1985. Copyright © 1985 Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University. Subscription rates: one year \$16; two years \$28; three years \$39. Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add \$3 per year. Back issues: \$4. Please address all subscription mail to: Columbia Journalism Review, Subscription Service Dept., 200 Alton Place, Marion, Ohio 43302. Editorial office: 700 Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027; (212) 280-5595. Business office: 700A Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027; (212) 280-2716. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing office. No claims for back copies honored after one year. National newsstand distribution: Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, Ohio 44870. **Postmaster:** send Form 3579 to Columbia Journalism Review, 200 Alton Place, Marion, Ohio 43302.



Dwight Knott,
Sun Company manager
of the Big Horn Ranch
and Reclamation
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THERE'S ENERGY.**

Silent partners in world health

Don't miss
"Quest for the Killers"
a PBS special series starting Monday, September 9.
See local listings for further information

Recent triumphs in the field of tropical medicine will soon be celebrated in "Quest for the Killers," a documentary series to be aired nationally on PBS. One program will describe the fight against a worm infestation called schistosomiasis on the island of St. Lucia in the Caribbean.

Schistosomiasis affects as many as 200 million people in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Puerto Rico and Latin America. It is often called "snail fever" because at one stage of their life cycle, *Schistosoma* worms infect snails that live on the bottom of rivers and streams. These parasites invade the skin of humans who drink, wash or swim in contaminated waters. They can cause severe itching, fever, diarrhea, and eventually irreversible damage to the liver. For 16 years, researchers visiting St. Lucia have been testing the practicality of various methods of control. Three approaches have proven to be most effective.

First, a public health team sprayed the rivers and streams of St. Lucia to get rid of infested snails. New plumbing facilities were constructed to assure a supply of uncontaminated water. Finally, treatment of people carrying the parasite was greatly facilitated by a drug developed and supplied by Pfizer. While previous treatments had to be given by injection, this drug was given orally only once, making it much simpler to reach a large number of people. The total control and elimination of the parasite is not yet a reality, but this combined medical and environmental program has done much to make life better for the people of the island.

Developing a drug such as this is a significant task that takes a decade or more and tens of millions of dollars. It generally involves the synthesis of hundreds of compounds in the organic chemistry laboratory. These compounds are then screened for antiparasitic activity. If one or more of them shows promise, the next step is to do toxicity studies and learn all about how the potential new drugs behave in laboratory animals. Only after completion of extensive, time-consuming animal studies can the drug be tested for safety and effectiveness in humans. And clinical trials in human patients can last for several years.

If the clinical trials indicate that the drug should be made available, new technology must be developed to produce it on a mass basis, and in cases like this, with little if any profitability for the developer.

Drug research and development isn't always "good theater." And it's largely a team endeavor generally without charismatic heroes. The days of Paul Ehrlich and his "magic bullet" are long past. The work of the pharmaceutical industry isn't usually the stuff of TV documentaries. But the drugs depicted in the various episodes came from the laboratories of pharmaceutical companies all over the world. The pharmaceutical industry has been the silent partner of government agencies, physicians, nurses and their associates who achieved public health miracles in St. Lucia and other developing countries.

In the Third World, pharmaceuticals are perhaps even more important than in advanced industrial countries. Often they are the only form of advanced medical technology which is practicable. Other forms of care, such as surgery, are often too cumbersome and too demanding of scarce resources. Drugs, by comparison, are portable, relatively inexpensive and comparatively simple to use.

The vast majority of drugs for the Third World and also for developed countries originate in the pharmaceutical industry. The government agencies do not have the broad expertise or resources for drug development, and medical schools and universities have different missions. Only the major research/pharmaceutical companies have the necessary skills and resources. Most manufacturers of generic drugs lack the research capabilities to create new drugs and test them for safety and efficacy. And that's only one reason an economically viable research-based pharmaceutical industry is important to all of us.

Pfizer is pleased to have been a partner in helping to reduce the hazards of one of the world's more widespread health problems. Pfizer is also pleased to have had an opportunity to help make it possible to tell this story. Therefore, we hope you will find time to watch "Quest for the Killers."



PHARMACEUTICALS • A PARTNER IN HEALTHCARE

CHRONICLE

Inc. and Stinc.: Chicago's latest feud

Last June, Slim Coleman, a Chicago community leader and an ally of Mayor Harold Washington, showed up in the *Chicago Tribune* column called *Inc.*, which trades in political tips. The widely read column reported allegations by unnamed opponents of the Washington administration that Coleman had arranged a wake, at a community center through which he receives city funds, for a young man with ties to the American Nazi Party. (*Inc.* noted, in brackets, that "the youth's parents claim their son had decided to leave the Nazi group a week before his death.") *Inc.* told readers to watch for "fireworks" at the city council that night when the opposition would denounce Mayor Washington for his administration's support of Coleman. Sure enough, there were fireworks that night: opposition leader Edward R. Vrdolyak leveled the charge of Nazi connections and, with cameras swarming around him, Coleman exploded. He jumped out of the gallery and began screaming at Vrdolyak, who found himself narrating for the television cameras. "That right there," he pronounced amid the chaos, "is government in the city of Chicago."

As it turned out, the Coleman story was more complex than *Inc.* had led readers to believe — Coleman says that he had formed a bond with the youth when he helped him

break with the American Nazi Party and that the break had led to his killing. The Washington administration points to the incident as another example of what it says is a campaign by its political opponents to use *Inc.* to discredit the mayor. The mayor's office has also accused *Inc.*'s writers of being openly sympathetic to the opposition's aims.

Inc. is "the best read thing in town," says the man who conceived the idea for the column, James D. Squires, executive vice-president and editor of the *Tribune*. The column, which has been running in the *Trib* since 1981, is written by three reporters and appears six days a week, usually on the back page of the front section, next to the weather map. Gossipy, off-the-wall (*Inc.* recently pointed out the physical resemblance between Nabih Berri, the Amal militia leader in Beirut, and New York Governor Mario Cuomo), the column often relies on anonymous sources and includes, as Squires puts it, "information that would never make a story on its own."

Squires concedes that some of the column's material — such as "what's being talked about at city hall, what's being heard on the street" — does not lend itself to extensive checking. "Some things get treated like the front page, others don't," he says.

Ever since Washington succeeded Jane

Byrne after a bitterly contested election in 1983, there have been feuds between the press and the mayor's office. *Inc.* has regularly irritated the administration with scoops on hirings and firings at city hall, not to mention such trivia as the mayor's opinion of his press secretary's glasses. The feeling in the mayor's office that *Inc.* is actively biased against Washington springs in part from the fact that *Inc.* reporter Michael Sneed's husband was Byrne's chief of staff, while Sneed herself left the *Tribune* to become Byrne's press secretary for three months in 1980. (Byrne recently began campaigning for the 1987 mayoral election.)

The mayor launched his battle against *Inc.* last October in a speech in which he gave the column "the big prize . . . for inaccuracy in journalism." Washington went on, "They printed completely wrong items for three days in a row. First they replaced my press secretary. Next they fired my chief of staff. Then they got rid of my head of security. I was waiting until they elected somebody new to replace me!"

But Washington was not content simply to poke fun at *Inc.* An assistant press secretary spent a month on city time last fall rating every *Inc.* column that had appeared since Washington took office in 1983. The resulting report contended that 58.72 percent of the references to the mayor in *Inc.* were "negative," while more than 80 percent of the items involving Alderman Vrdolyak or the majority opposition bloc in the city council were "positive" or "neutral."

Then last spring Alton Miller, Washington's press secretary, saying he had decided the best response to a "no-win situation" was to set up a forum of his own, began periodically adding a section called "*Stinc.*" to the packet of releases the city distributes to the city hall press corps each week. The first *Stinc.* said in part, "In accordance with accepted journalistic practices, we guarantee anonymity to our sources, and promise never to call to check the accuracy of our stories."

Stinc. mimics its target's style. One item, for instance, rapped an *Inc.* report that the mayor might be canceling his trip to a meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Alaska, pointing out that the mayor had never planned to attend. "What Juneau?" it began. "Is it true that the gossip columnists of a major metropolitan daily had their bags packed for an Alaska junket . . .?"

Inc. has gotten criticism from other quarters. *The Reader*, a weekly, has assailed Squires for countenancing a double standard of news judgment in his pages, and called the column "gossip with half-proved alle-

Tweakings: Michael Sneed (right) of *Inc.*, the column that often irks Mayor Harold Washington (left). At center, an enraged Slim Coleman stalks out of a meeting after a confrontation *Inc.* had predicted.



above: UPI/Beitmann

Chicago Tribune

OFFICE AUTOMATION: HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Sometime last year American business crossed a technological Rubicon. For the first time in our history, capital investment per office worker exceeded that per factory hand.

Like it or not, information has finally surpassed material goods as our basic resource.

Walter Wriston, ex-Citicorp chief, likens information to a new form of capital, one that is arguably "more critical to the future of the American economy than money capital."

Every day brings news of faster, smaller, more capable devices to serve the 70% of us who now work with this new form of capital.

But while the trend spotters on

continued on next page



“

Today's customer must strike a balance between making the most of what's on hand and fighting like crazy to keep next year's options open.

”

the *integrated* business system.

Today's customer must strike a balance between making the most of what's on hand and fighting like crazy to keep next year's options open.

MISSING LINKS. Between today's a la carte systems and the office-wide, integrated everything of tomorrow is ... what?

For many companies, the missing links are *networks*. By permitting different kinds of computers and other devices to share information, networks can pull today's stand-alone business machines into organized "islands" of automation.

Since these islands themselves can

be networked together, users can widen the scope of automation in an organization pretty much at will.

Some companies have the backbone of an *office-wide* network already in place. Today's digital telephone switching systems (PBXs) convert speech into the same "bits" and "bytes" that computers use.

This means that many an existing telephone network can double as a highway for business data — and that "office automation" need have no geographic limits.

A plug for the home team: Every vendor does some things better than the other guys. While communications and data networks are drawing-board doodles in some shops, they

are bread and butter items at AT&T.

It may be AT&T's greatest strength that we can integrate new and existing systems whether we provide *all* of those systems, or *some* of those systems, or the bridges between them.

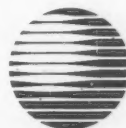
SUCCESS. Like the first Industrial Revolution, this one will lift some companies and confound others.

Those without a coherent plan to manage information in *all* its forms — the spoken word, thoughts on paper, images, and computer data — will be at a disadvantage.

In the long run, your success with office automation will have less to do with whose machines you buy — or how many — than with how freely information travels among them. It is the relationships you set up *between* the machines, not the devices themselves, that will tell the tale.

P.S. Much of this message was drawn from *The Integration Puzzle*, a two-day seminar offered by AT&T's Institute for Communications and Information Management. For further information or for a catalogue of AT&T Seminars in eight cities, please telephone 1 800 247-1212.

Or write Mr. Dale Hegstrom, AT&T Information Systems, P.O. Box 1405, Morristown, NJ 07960-1405.



AT&T

The right choice.

— continued from preceding page —

their mountaintops cheer this "Second Industrial Revolution," the view from the front lines is not so rosy.

Too often, new devices are an uneasy fit with their sister machines of just a year ago. Too often, systems intended to simplify office life have the opposite effect. Grouses one manager: "The more business machines we buy, the more we seem to need."

Change is rampant. The stakes are high. Confusion is king.

RASCALS. The best way to make sense of all this technology may be to ignore the whole business for a week

or so and think about how your office works instead.

Who uses what kind of information? Where does it come from? What do they do with it?

No company on earth has pockets so deep that it can afford to automate every aspect of its business. Some hard choices lie ahead.

Item: In a typical office, 75% of the salary dollars go to managers and professionals. The system that spares these expensive rascals from a morning meeting or an hour of returning phone calls may be a better investment than one that does a whole day's work for someone else.

Item: The lion's share of time spent in any office is spent *communicating*:

listening, talking, chasing down stray facts, dealing with mail.

Were you to keep a log, you'd be appalled by how little time you have for actually producing "work." (Par for senior executives: about 15%.)

To leverage time, look for ways to *move* information more efficiently.

A desktop computer can perform in minutes the spreadsheet analyses that used to gobble hours. But how much is gained if the figures still walk from office to office in a mail cart?

Item: Streamlining the internal workings of your office may be less profitable than automating ties with customers or suppliers.

Japanese style "just in time" deliveries from suppliers are helping U.S. automakers slash inventory costs. Computerized flight information systems have given some airlines a strategic advantage with travel agents.

No company succeeds alone.

No company on earth has pockets so deep that it can afford to automate every aspect of its business. Some hard choices lie ahead.

BALANCE. Complicating the question of where your systems dollar is best spent is where you spent it last time out. And the time before that. A lot of past choices are coming back to haunt today's manager.

Reason: most of the systems clicking away in offices today were purchased a la carte — when phones were phones, computers were computers, and "office automation" meant word processing and copiers.

Now the walls between these separate technologies are tumbling down.

Some office telephone systems can now process data. Computers have evolved that can communicate.

It's dawning on customers and vendors alike that the future belongs to

Let's listen to the voices of reason

Several weeks ago we explained why we believe that free trade—not import quotas or tariffs—will do the most for America's long-term economic welfare. We were arguing against any need for new trade barriers directed against imported petroleum products, but the logic applies equally to all manufactured goods.

Apparently we're not the only ones who favor free trade, as these examples of editorial opinion from around the country show:

The New York Times, on "protection" against gasoline imports: "...gasoline imports pose no threat to American security. The proposed protection for domestic refiners would cost consumers billions and only slow the much-needed rationalization of the industry."

The Journal of Commerce, also on gasoline imports: "While quotas have been known to help U.S. industries in the past, such benefits have almost always been at the consumer's expense....There is reason to believe that gasoline quotas would have a similar effect."

The Los Angeles Times: "Protectionism is a formula that only postpones the industrial adjustments essential to survival in a competitive world market....America invites declining economic health when it retreats from world competition behind trade barriers."

Newsday: "...protectionism is ultimately bad policy, pushing up consumer prices, re-

warding less efficient producers and inviting countermeasures from abroad."

The San Francisco Chronicle: "The Western Nations, including the United States and Japan, should move to create more free trade, not less. New tariffs, imposed in a national panic, are not the way to go, particularly among friendly nations whose economies, like their politics, are closely tied."

Economist Robert J. Samuelson, in a column in **American Banker**: "...protection is often a 'negative sum game': Everyone loses; total trade declines, or restrictions raise prices without providing genuine protection."

The Chicago Tribune, on the recently expired voluntary quotas for Japanese cars: "Americans, besides having their choices restricted, have had to pay higher prices for new and used cars than they would have otherwise. Some autoworkers' jobs have been saved, but at an estimated cost per job of \$160,000 a year. The chief beneficiaries are the big Japanese automakers, whose profit per car has risen enough to more than cancel out the lost volume."

America does have trade problems. But they largely stem from the strength of the U.S. dollar, which makes American products more costly overseas. It's tempting to look for a quick fix, but protectionism fixes nothing. It only protects the few at the expense of the many...to the detriment of all.

Mobil

gations." And reporters on the *Tribune's* city desk, who sometimes find themselves competing with *Inc.* for stories, express little respect for the column, says one reporter, speaking anonymously. "The ultimate purpose of *Inc.* is to dump on the mayor," the reporter says. "It's transparent."

For her part, *Inc.* reporter Sneed says, "It is true in the percentage of tweakdom that Vrdolyak has been tweaked less than Washington." But she says this is a reflection of the difference in media skills between the two sides in the political struggle. Opposition politicians, as Squires puts it, "know how to use *Inc.* better than Washington knows

how to use *Inc.*" Sneed, who is forty-two and has distinguished herself in more conventional types of reporting, also counters charges that she doesn't check things out. "I make my phone calls," she says.

Both editor and reporter say they are proud of the column. Squires says that *Inc.* embodies "some of the longest and best traditions in American journalism," traditions that include such luminaries as Hedda Hopper, Walter Winchell, Drew Pearson, and Jack Anderson. Sneed adds, "I have discovered that *Inc.* is an incredibly powerful piece of journalism. I like being a part of that."

The column is widely acknowledged as

contributing strongly to the *Tribune's* circulation. Its readiness to gossip appeals to the city's appetite for the dare and double dare, with many Chicagoans turning to *Inc.* to see just how much it can get away with. "You are to journalism what a freak show is to theater," one reader wrote to *Inc.* not long ago. Notwithstanding such criticism, *Inc.* seems well on its way to becoming an institution in a city whose politics are a traditional source of entertainment.

John Hockenberry

John Hockenberry is a reporter in National Public Radio's Chicago bureau.



courtesy The Dispatch

Was this the Herald-Citizen's Charles Denning plundering a competitor's newsrack?

Purloined papers in Tennessee

People in Cookeville, Tennessee, sometimes speak of *The Dispatch*, the more freewheeling of the city's two newspapers, as "the dogpatch," and the Williams family, which runs it, as being "country." Last year *Dispatch* owner Osia Williams went bankrupt and then just about everything that could go wrong for the paper did. One might have thought that the more established and sober newspaper in Cookeville, the *Herald-Citizen*, would have been content to ignore its struggling rival and let it slide away. But all that was before the videotape.

The Dispatch's string of misfortunes began when Williams went bankrupt in September 1984 and continued later that fall when she was charged with passing worthless checks to the tune of \$9,000 in Nashville, which is seventy-five miles west of Cookeville. At one point in the case, when Williams failed to show up in court, a bench warrant was issued for her arrest. Early this year *The Dispatch* began scaling back its staff and cut its publishing schedule from five to three times a

week (Osia Williams said it would be back to five times a week by August). Meanwhile, the Federal Communications Commission rejected an application by publisher Pat Williams, the owner's son, for a broadcasting license, and in March a court ordered him to pay \$55,000 he owed to a paper company.

Then in late April *The Dispatch* got another piece of bad news. Newspapers were disappearing from a rack in front of the K-Mart on Dixie Avenue.

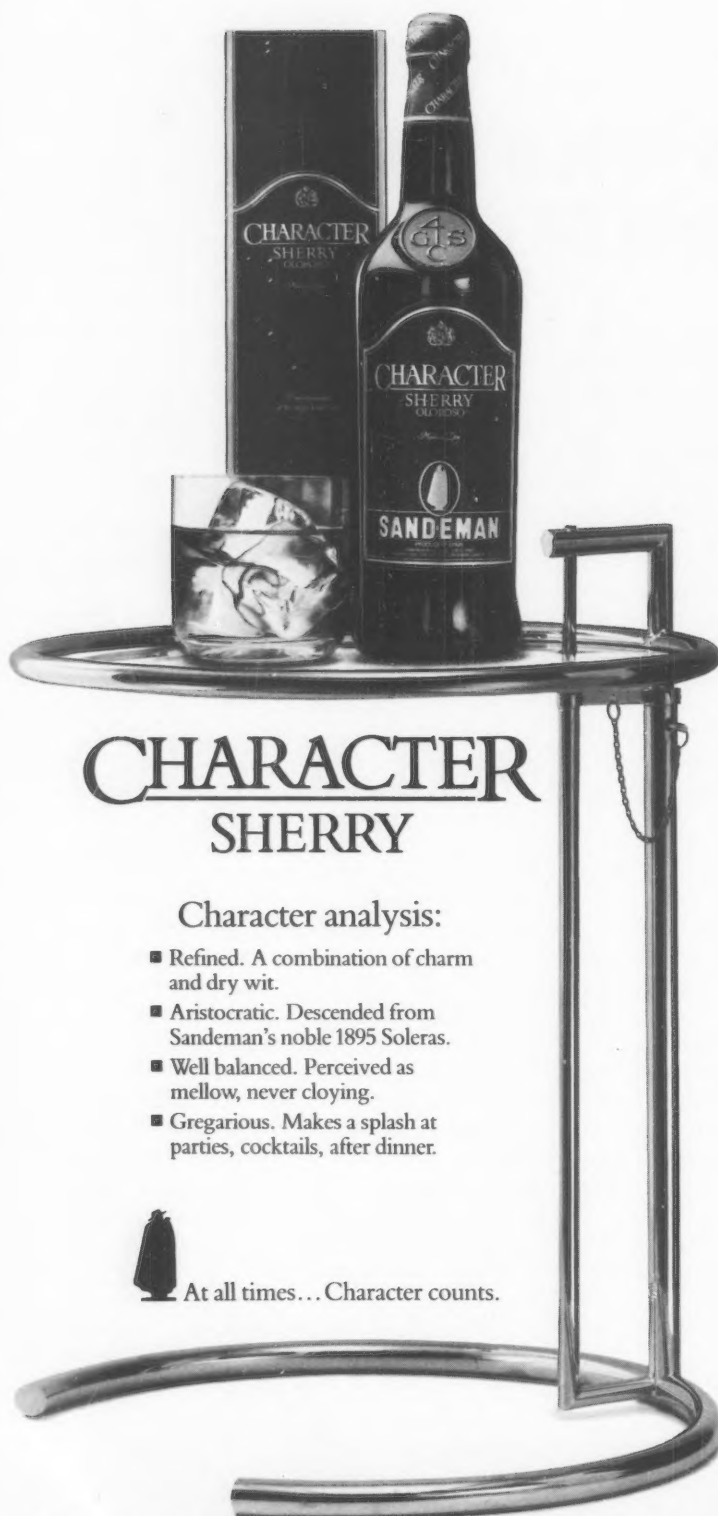
The box in question was only a stone's throw from the offices of the *Herald-Citizen*, which was, in contrast to *The Dispatch*, doing well. It had far more advertising than the Williamses' paper and its staff of fifty was about twice the size of its rival's. *The Dispatch* does report a higher circulation than the *Herald-Citizen* to the Tennessee Press Association—10,594 to 10,152, healthy figures for a city of 20,000—but the *Herald-Citizen's* figure is audited while *The Dispatch's* is not.

The Dispatch changed its K-Mart rack to

an open rack, with a window through which the papers could be seen from a distance, and began what Pat Williams called "surveillance." Steve Byars, the paper's chief photographer, set up a video camera in a van and staked out the box from a parking spot.

On May 1 Byars came back to his office with a tape that showed a man in a tie putting a quarter into the box, taking out all twenty-one papers, and walking away with them. Pat Williams took the tape to the district attorney's office in Cookeville. A clerk of the circuit court later swore out warrants, and Putnam County authorities arrested Charles Denning, executive editor of the *Herald-Citizen*. Denning was charged with two counts of petit larceny, one count referring to an incident a week before, when nineteen papers had disappeared.

The next day's *Dispatch* was dominated by the story. "Denning beats a path to his Subaru . . . after looting the rack," asserted a caption under one of three photos on the front page. Pat Williams was quoted in the



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CHRONICLE

story as saying: "It is difficult to believe your competition would stoop to stealing your papers. . . . Obviously there is something in our paper which has a strong attraction for Mr. Denning and the *Herald-Citizen*." The paper sought no comment from Denning.

The *Herald-Citizen* took action of its own in mid-May, when it sued *The Dispatch* for allegedly luring advertisers with padded circulation figures. Meanwhile, the *Herald-Citizen* is mixed up in a court case involving its own circulation. Earlier in the spring it had fired its circulation manager and then sued him for allegedly stealing money from *Herald-Citizen* newsracks, and he in turn had sued the *Herald-Citizen* for what he called its "outrageous conduct" toward him, including what he claims were demands that he inflate circulation figures.

Not surprisingly, *The Dispatch* has made editorial hay out of all the litigation. "What we're dealing with here are desperate, vicious people who have the money to hire expensive lawyers and tie us up in court," one article said after the *Herald-Citizen* filed suit. "More Dirty Pool, Joe Albrecht?" was the title of an editorial castigating the *Herald-Citizen* publisher. Later *The Dispatch* called on Albrecht and other members of the *Herald-Citizen* staff to resign.

For its part the *Herald-Citizen* has covered the disputes with short, largely factual items. Albrecht, a former president of the Tennessee Press Association, says the two papers' dealings do not amount to a war because only one side is firing. "I obviously can't be pleased with all the personal attacks," he says, "but I'm more disturbed by their lack of professionalism. I don't think it's in the public's interest [for a paper] to attack the competition in news columns and editorial pages."

As for the status of the alleged miscreants on the newspapers:

□ In the case of the bad checks, Osia Williams in a pretrial hearing agreed to make restitution and in June was placed in a "pretrial diversion" program, which is likely to lead to the dropping of the charges.

□ In the case of the raid on the coinbox, a judge sitting in a Cookeville courtroom denied Charles Denning's request that the charges against him be reduced to shoplifting. The case was bound over to a grand jury. As CJR went to press, the panel had yet to reach a decision on an indictment.

Neither Denning nor Osia Williams had any comment on the cases.

Clarke Canfield

Clarke Canfield is a reporter for the Nashville Banner.

Busting a heavenly trust

For twenty years the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization, known as Intelsat, has been a highly successful example of global cooperation. But recent moves by the Reagan administration to challenge Intelsat's monopoly could very well compromise the organization's role as the world's information utility.

Under a treaty signed by 110 countries, including the United States, Intelsat's sixteen satellites have exclusive rights to almost all international satellite communications. When a billion people in sixty-eight countries watched the Olympics last year, they did so via Intelsat. When reporters and cameramen filed from Beirut in June, they too relied on Intelsat. Since the U.S. and thirteen other countries combined to put up the Early Bird satellite in 1965, Intelsat has been the only game in town for overseas satellite services.

Last November, however, the Reagan administration approved plans by six American companies to invade Intelsat's celestial turf. The firms have plans to establish satellite communications routes of their own across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. "[They] want to skim the cream off the system without using the revenues to provide needed services elsewhere," says Richard Colino, Intelsat's American director-general.

Colino is proud of Intelsat's egalitarian charter: nations around the world are charged a fixed rate per transmission, even though the majority of the traffic is over the so-called thick routes, New York to London and Paris, San Francisco to Hong Kong, on which costs per transmission are relatively low. Essentially, then, business between the big financial centers subsidizes users on less-traveled routes — say, the Algerian telephone system, which sends calls from Algiers to provincial centers via an Intelsat satellite. Colino calls the system "the greatest technology transfer in history."

Intelsat has fostered journalism in many of the 160 countries its net covers. Last year, for instance, the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union began Asiavision, a service by which twelve countries in the Pacific and Southeast Asia exchange TV news items; lately they've been sharing stories about the living conditions of children. Intelsat has also been working on a plan to distribute micro-earthstations to out-of-the-way places, allowing them to receive copy and possibly to send it as well.

Obviously, Western coverage of the third world and more remote regions also benefits

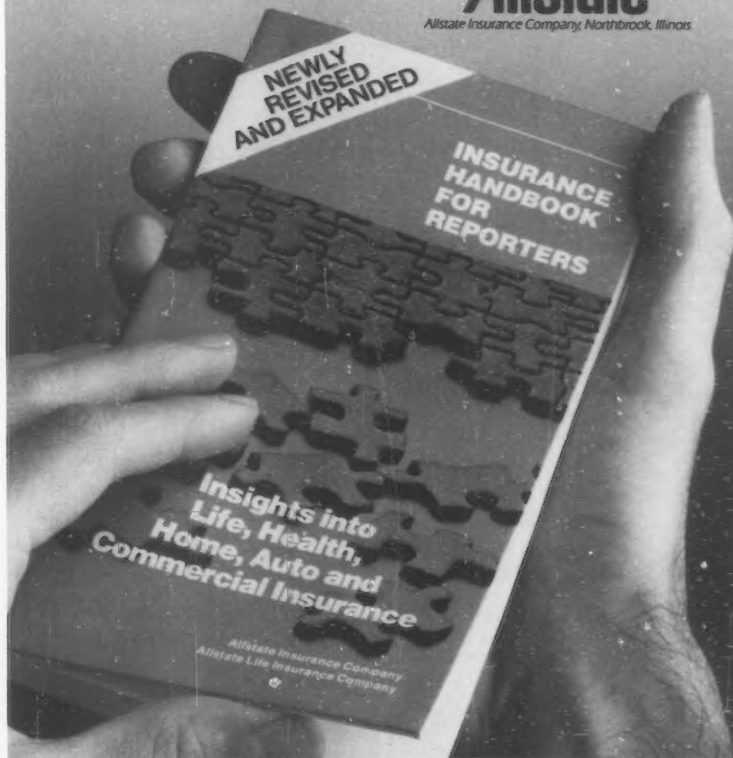
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from the system. Tony Naets, the New York bureau chief of the European Broadcasting Union, worries that deregulation could even have the effect of blacking out stories. "What this means," he says, "is that the next time Reagan gets shot, or a silly British princess marries, we can be assured of coverage. But what about the next round of events in Teheran or Nicaragua?"

Deregulation also has its supporters. Many users complain that Intelsat is a bureaucracy that is often difficult to work with. Joe Rawley, a publisher in High Point, North Carolina, who serves on an American Newspaper Publishers Association committee on international communications, says that while he is not concerned about Intelsat's bureaucracy, he has observed "a growing impetus" for deregulation all over the West as a "natural part of the explosion of new technology."

In July the Federal Communications Commission gave three of the six competitors permission to begin planning their own satellite services, but Congress is expected to scrutinize the proposals this fall. The Reagan administration has maintained to congressional supporters of Intelsat that it is protecting the system by barring competition for its basic telephone service, which provides

Intelsat with most of its revenue. But competition would affect those operations with greatest potential for growth, notably the use of digital signals to send electronic mail, transmit human voices, and set up teleconferences between, for example, far-flung offices of a multinational corporation. This is the technology some refer to as the "digital revolution."

The protection the Reagan administration is offering Intelsat is a "safety net . . . made of cheesecloth," says one critic, Abbott Washburn, a former FCC commissioner who helped write the Intelsat charter. The greatest fear among Intelsat's friends is that deregulation will bring not only higher rates and priority for corporate users, but also the intrusion of nationalist sentiments into what has been a surprisingly undisputable arena. "Intelsat's real strength is that it's an international organization," says Roku Ito, who retired this summer as secretary general of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union. "No one country can decide to turn off your service in case they get angry at you."

Jeffrey Chester

Jeffrey Chester is a free-lance writer and television producer in the San Francisco area.

Ireland's bridled broadcasters

It was an abrupt and absurd closing to an interview. Pat Kenny, a radio correspondent for the Irish national broadcasting system, was doing a live report on a Dublin neighborhood that was trying to rid itself of heroin pushers. Kenny had a milkman who was also a community leader on the phone line, and the man complained that no one in authority was doing anything about the problem. "Why don't you get involved in politics yourself, then?" Kenny said. "I am, I'm a member of Sinn Fein," the man responded, referring to the political party that supports the reunification of Ireland by force.

And that was it; Kenny had to end the interview. "I don't care if you're talking about babies' clothing or ice cream," Kenny recalls saying. "I can't talk to you."

Though the censorship is rarely so dramatic in its effects as that aborted interview two years ago, correspondents for the national network, Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE), at all times work under a government order barring them from broadcasting interviews with members of Sinn Fein, which backs the

On Trade Union Officials, Journalists and The First Amendment...



"Thank God for journalists; they were at just about the level of popularity as trade union officials in the last poll I saw, and I suspect it's for the same reason: we both vigorously exercise and assert our First Amendment rights. We depend for our existence and for our freedom upon the same amendment, the First Amendment. We vigorously assert it, you vigorously assert it. It's dirty work, but somebody's got to do it."

Lane Kirkland President, AFL-CIO

(In response to a reporter's question March 22, 1985, Portland, Oregon)

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Irish Republican Army (IRA), and of other groups. Orders of this kind have been in effect for fourteen years and, despite frequent calls for reform, there appears little likelihood of any change in the policy.

The censorship order frequently results in gross lapses in news coverage, as it did during elections last spring. Sinn Fein candidates won fifty-nine local council seats in Northern Ireland in May and thirty-nine local government seats in the Republic of Ireland in June. While many of these victors were quoted in the Irish papers, they remained essentially voiceless so far as Ireland's radio and television service was concerned.

The policy has become more of an encumbrance in recent years as Sinn Fein has grown in popularity. For instance, many inside RTE regard as farcical the way the system reported on a particular landmark in the party's progress: a by-election held in Fermanagh/South Tyrone in Northern Ireland four years ago to fill the British Parliament seat left vacant when Bobby Sands, an imprisoned IRA member, died while on a hunger strike. Owen Carron, a Sinn Fein member, won the election and was surrounded that night by reporters and cameramen from around the world, but RTE correspondent Póilín Ní Chiaráin was re-

Propaganda: A mural in Derry, Northern Ireland, where the censorship order in effect in the Irish republic is called a blindfold.



stricted to interviewing the loser and shooting silent footage of Carron. "It was the most compromising and humiliating night of my journalistic career," she recalls.

Even more significant perhaps than such obvious suppressions is the order's impact on assignments and other editorial decisions. Some reporters say the law has fostered self-censorship. "Where we once excelled in our reportage and investigation of events in the North, the creeping ax-man of political censorship has now reduced us to a hack news organization," one unidentified RTE employee told the authors of a report put out by

the National Union of Journalists.

The censorship dates to the original Broadcasting Act of 1960, whose Section 31 enables the minister for posts and telegraphs to direct RTE in writing "to refrain from broadcasting any particular matter." This power was first exercised in 1971, and a year later then-minister Gerry Collins sacked the RTE board after a radio reporter summarized an interview with the IRA chief of staff.

There was more trouble in 1974, when the RTE broadcast interviews with detainees in Northern Ireland who told of brutal interrogations by the British Army. The minister of

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CHRONICLE

posts and telegraphs was then Conor Cruise O'Brien, the author, academic, and former United Nations official, who argued that such reports created sympathy for the IRA. In 1976 O'Brien (who now writes a column for *The Irish Times*) issued a directive whose terms are still in force; it banned material that would be likely to "undermine the authority of the State."

O'Brien specifically forbade reports of interviews with members of any organizations in Northern Ireland considered illegal by the British government and also with members of legal groups that support illegal organizations, including Sinn Féin and the Ulster Defense Association, a paramilitary group. Reporters have at times been told that they must ask subjects whether they are members of the banned groups before interviewing them. This has severely limited RTE coverage of goings-on in the Dublin slums, where the Sinn Féin is active.

One paradoxical aspect of the situation is that the British Broadcasting Corporation, Ulster Television, and Independent Television all regularly interview or report on people whom RTE can't interview — and those three services are piped into more than half the homes in Ireland via the RTE's own cable system.

Some members of the opposition party Fianna Fail, as well as some members of the Labour Party, which is in the ruling coalition, have called for revocation of the censorship order. Newspaper columnists regularly assail Section 31. But there is, for the time being, no sign of a change of heart on the part of Fine Gael, the party that makes up the majority of the governing coalition. Mike Burns, head of RTE radio news, laments, "I don't see any light at the end of the tunnel, to use that old Vietnam phrase." Indeed, Martin Burke, political counselor at the Irish Embassy in Washington, says the government feels that groups supporting the IRA's "violent activities" deserve no recognition from the state, whether that means meetings with representatives of the government or access to its broadcasting system.

Some say that Section 31's proscriptions are now so imbedded in RTE staff practices that it would be difficult for the news organization to adjust if real freedom ever came. "If you removed Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act in the morning," Ronan O'Donoghue, an RTE radio current-affairs producer, says wryly, "this place would have a massive cerebral hemorrhage."

Donna DeCesare

Donna DeCesare is a New York writer and photographer who was in Ireland last spring.



Before and after: Hubie Vigreux taped as cops manhandled a suspect (above). Later the camera kept rolling when Vigreux was knocked down and surrounded by officers.



both: C.J.R./Pamela Duffy

Videoed violence in New Orleans

The three-minute videotape of the nighttime confrontation looks less like news than a sur-realist exercise. The camera is held at eye level for thirty seconds and after that allowed to dangle, then is tossed about and finally set on its side to focus on a polished marble wall that reflects the lights of police cars. A bullish figure in uniform repeats huskily, "I want the film." A second voice, apparently the cameraman's, taunts, "Take me to fucking jail!" Shadows move furiously on the wall. Then come screams, and at last a plaintive, "Man, you can have the film, brother," before the tape blacks out.

The tape records the arrest in New Orleans last spring of Hubie Vigreux, a cameraman at television station WDSU, by Mississippi River Bridge Authority police. Vigreux and Lynn Gansar, a WDSU anchor, had been on their way back to their offices at about 9 P.M. on April 18 when they spotted police scuffling with a man near the Greater New Orleans Bridge. Vigreux, who is thirty-two, jumped from the WDSU car and, without turning on his lights, began taping as police handcuffed the man face down on the ground. The suspect, James Wayne Winkler, who had been stopped for alleged reckless driving, cried that he was being beaten. The tape records officer Lewis J. Taylor saying, "That's good for your fucking ass" and officer Joseph Hebert jabbing Winkler at the base of his head.

continued

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At this point Taylor spotted Vigreux and strode towards him, demanding his "film." Vigreux tried to placate the officer but Taylor pinned him and later handcuffed him. During the altercation with Taylor and other officers, Vigreux was pushed to the ground, kicked, and then lifted by means of the handcuffs. He and Gansar pleaded with the officers to release his arms or pin them in front of his body because he was still recovering from a broken arm he had suffered in a car accident months before.

The camera, meanwhile, landed on the sidewalk and was then set atop a car; it continued to roll till Vigreux finally instructed his captors how to turn it off and remove the tape. Police then took Vigreux to jail, where he spent an hour behind bars.

After being released, Vigreux sought treatment for a fracture of the right wrist and bruises. The next morning he was arraigned on the charge of interfering with police officers, a charge that was subsequently dropped. That morning, too, the police returned the tape to WDSU.

Action against the officers was swift. A week after the incident a federal grand jury indicted Taylor, Hebert, and two other officers on charges stemming from the arrests of Vigreux and the original suspect, James

Winkler. After a three-day trial in July during which Vigreux's tape was played many times, all four men were convicted of civil-rights violations. Sentencing was scheduled for late August.

Three of the officers, including Taylor and Hebert, were also charged by the Orleans parish district attorney's office with simple battery and false imprisonment, and Taylor was charged with theft for his confiscation of the videotape. This case had not yet come to trial as of mid-summer. Meanwhile, Winkler, who faces local charges of resisting arrest, battery on a police officer, and possession of marijuana, has sued all four officers as well as state authorities over injuries he received.

Repercussions of the case have centered on the bridge police, who provide security at bridges and ferry crossings and whose training is not as rigorous as that of other police units. The bridge police have a reputation for brutality, stemming in part from altercations with a Coast Guard officer last year and with another TV cameraman several years ago. In the wake of the Vigreux case, the state's Transportation Department fired Taylor and suspended the three other officers indefinitely, but the incident has prompted calls for institutional changes.

The Times-Picayune/The States-Item editorialized in favor of more training for the bridge police or turning over the unit's supervision to a law-enforcement agency. Larry Price, WDSU news director, echoed these demands, saying, "If they would do this to a photographer who is there protected by a camera, what would they do to the average Joe Citizen?" A bill in the state legislature last session would have transferred command of the police to the Department of Corrections and Public Safety. The bill passed the house but died in a senate committee.

Jeanne Weill

Jeanne Weill is a free-lance writer living in New Orleans.

Hartford's car wars

Roger Moore, metropolitan editor of *The Hartford Courant*, says the story was a good example of a newspaper applying "checks and balances" to public officials. What he didn't count on was that the officials would promptly give the *Courant* a dose of its own medicine.

On May 15 two *Courant* reporters hit the

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capitol parking lot that is reserved for members of the Connecticut General Assembly and began ticking off the vehicles that did not have up-to-date emissions-inspection stickers on their windshields. The four-year-old law requiring a \$10 annual trip to an emissions station has been a frequent subject of citizens' complaints, but the legislature has refused to repeal it, upholding it most recently in late April, three weeks before *Courant* reporters Steve Grant and Dave Lesher began their investigation. Special license plates issued to lawmakers made identification of the scofflaws a simple matter.

Word of the surprise attack caused a stir inside the statehouse, as some lawmakers and their aides rushed out to see whether they were in compliance. Those who found they were in violation directed interns to take their cars to be inspected and later reported their clean status to the *Courant's* capitol bureau.

EMISSIONS VIOLATIONS A CAPITOL CRIME was the four-column headline on the *Courant's* front page the next day. The accompanying story named seventeen lawmakers (out of a 187-member body) whose stickers had expired, and included a tongue-in-cheek description of the legislators' efforts to escape detection.

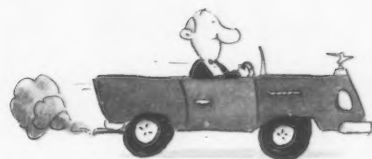
Later that day the legislators struck back.



Organized by Timothy Moynihan, a state representative and chairman of the state's Democratic Party, a group of interns appeared on the *Courant's* parking lot and began checking the emissions stickers on the cars there. "We weren't looking for serious retaliation," Moynihan says. "It was just a way of brightening a few hours on a dull day."

The counterattack prompted a reaction on the part of reporters similar to that of the lawmakers. "There certainly was a wave of folks from the *Courant* going over to the emissions-test stations," says editor Moore, who admits that his own sticker was three days overdue.

Moynihan had threatened to publish the names of violators in the legislature's daily



bulletin, but the difficulty of establishing whether owners of cars with overdue stickers were *Courant* employees kept the legislature from compiling a list. The legislators did come up with one name, David Fink, a reporter in the capitol bureau. The *Courant* covered the counterattack, this time on the front page of the state news section. "Fair is fair," Marty Petty, the managing editor, was quoted as saying, and the story included Fink's name. "No excuses," Fink was quoted as responding. "Just spell my name right."

Ned Barnett

Ned Barnett is a statehouse reporter for the Connecticut State News Bureau, an independent news service.

XEROX

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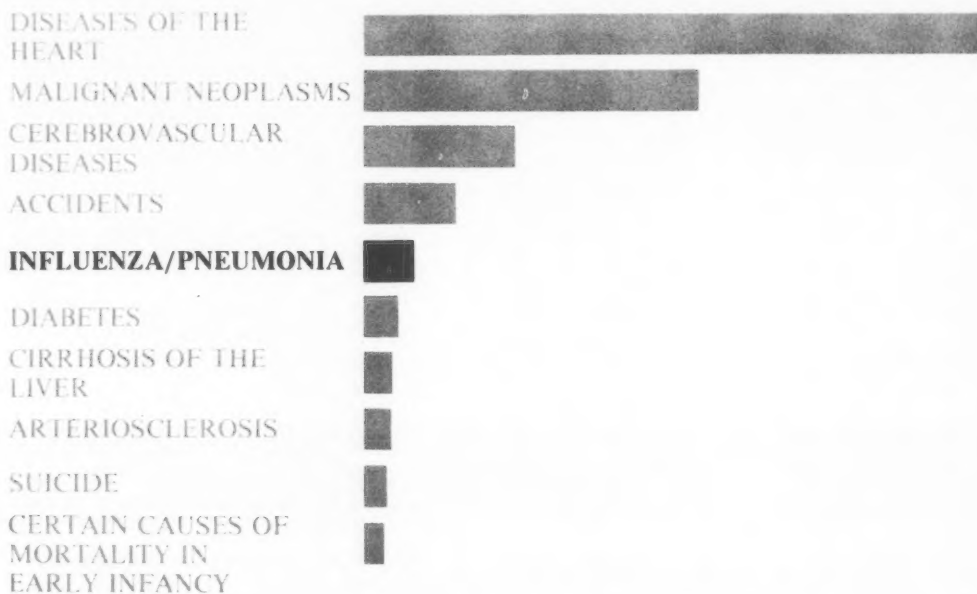
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COMMENT

America held hostage, Part II

Now that it belongs to the long ago — back before the president's cancer surgery, before Hurricane Bob, before the baseball strike — the furor over press coverage of the June hostage crisis may seem as overwrought as was the coverage itself. The volume of the coverage accorded the Lebanese captivity of passengers and crew of TWA Flight 847 was prodigious. For more than two weeks, the three major networks devoted more than half of their premier news programs to the story, giving it uncanceled hours of unscheduled time as well. Meanwhile, it appeared in various forms on page one of *The New York Times* every day from June 15 through July 7.

In commentaries at the time and in a congressional inquiry in July, representatives of the news industry treated this intense — even obsessive — focus as a natural phenomenon, the attention earned, according to the canons of news, by a story of surpassing importance. This proposition was put most succinctly by Russell Baker in the *Times* of July 10: "Given a competitive news industry in a nation devoted to the principle of maximizing profits, should the kidnapping of a host of Americans by murderous thugs be treated by television as though it were not of much interest?"

The answer must surely be no. The story did demand attention and the freedom to cover it. The most vigorous criticism of the networks, of course, was not that they overplayed the story but that they played into the hands of the terrorists by giving them a forum for their views and demands. But it is the job of journalists to report the identity and aims of hostage takers, and it is the special advantage of television that it can bring us face to face with them. The proposal made by Prime Minister Thatcher of Great Britain and seconded by U.S. Attorney General Meese for a voluntary media code of self-censorship during terrorist incidents would, if put into use, harm the public more than it would the terrorists.

Still, freedom to report imposes heavy responsibilities on the press. The public is entitled to expect that news organizations, as they plunge into a hostage story, will apply their own best standards rather than succumb to the pack psychology that so often reigns in major competitive situations.

That standards can be upheld is shown by a study of ABC and CBS evening news programs carried out by William C. Adams of George Washington University. Working from tapes of the period from June 14 through June 29, Adams found that the two networks differed sharply in their handling of the almost daily interviews with hostages selected, and closely supervised, by their Shiite captors. According to Adams, ABC rarely reminded viewers of the circum-

stances under which the hostages were interviewed and the conditions under which the material was provided. By contrast, CBS consistently attempted to provide context and perspective; for example, it put on the air a psychologist who analyzed the pressures on the hostages during interviews and, on another occasion, discussed the captors' strategy in providing the interviews.

How big a story is a hostage crisis? Of course it is of interest, but is it of supreme interest? In a discussion in *The New Republic* (July 29, 1985), Walter Laqueur, author of *Terrorism*, notes that any major terrorist act all but freezes an administration: "Indeed, the Reagan administration, despite its claims to the contrary, appeared to be almost as paralyzed during the Beirut hostage crisis as Jimmy Carter was during the Iran crisis."

The news media appeared to be similarly transfixed. Although television was accused of providing a platform for the terrorists, the news media's overriding definition of the crisis was that of the president: "The United States . . . is a nation being attacked by international terrorists." Such acceptance of a government framework dates back at least to 1979 when ABC, reflecting the Carter White House's obsession with the Iranian crisis, coined the hyperbolic slogan for its daily late-evening special "America Held Hostage." (The *New York Post* and *Time* briefly used a similar coinage in 1985: "America Under the Gun.")

One of the tasks of journalism is to provide an assessment independent of that of the government and to stand apart from, rather than incite, the jingoism and xenophobia that spread so rapidly in situations involving the seizure of American citizens. In the Beirut hostage-taking, as in Iran, such detachment was hard to find. There was nothing inherently wrong with the scope of the coverage, but its volume was symptomatic of a state of mind: journalism, in effect, was wearing its own yellow ribbon and keeping its headlights on.

Darts and laurels

Dart: to WJBK-TV, Detroit, for personnel practices that would make Ebenezer Scrooge look good. The station forced a staff reporter headed for the hostage crisis in Beirut to sign a waiver saying the assignment was voluntary and releasing the station and its parent, Storer Communications, from any liability if anything happened to him there. And, in a similar grasping vein, the station made its weatherman use personal vacation time when he did a two-week stint as substitute weathercaster on the CBS Morning News — then turned around and published a promotional ad crowing about his appearance on the national network show. (And thanks

to media critic Mike Duffy, who exposed the two "chintzy" episodes in the *Detroit Free Press*.)

Laurel: to the Lafayette, Louisiana, weekly *Times* and reporter Jason Berry, for a compelling examination of the tragedy of pedophilia in the Catholic priesthood. Sensitively tracing the personal, institutional, and legal dramas surrounding the confession by a local priest that over a ten-year period he had sexually molested some thirty young altar boys and boy scouts in his charge, Berry's three-part series (May 23-June 13) went on to document the reporter's anguished discovery, during the course of his research, of a pattern of allegations against Catholic priests for similar crimes across the land — as well as a disturbing tendency on the part of chancery officials to avert their eyes. Related coverage of the scandal in the June 7 *National Catholic Reporter* (to which Berry contributed) was accompanied by a page-one editorial stressing the moral and practical imperatives for responsible policy action by the church.

Dart: to W. C. Furney, staff reporter for the Jacksonville, North Carolina, *Daily News*, for a sympathetic front-page profile of controversial real estate developer Marlow Bostic (DEVELOPER SAYS HE'S MISUNDERSTOOD) that neglected to mention a number of salient facts: (1) that since 1976 Bostic has been cited by the state at least fifteen times for violating environmental regulations; (2) that two of Bostic's companies had recently been fined \$24,000 for illegally altering a tidal creek; and (3) that during the course of Furney's interview with Bostic, the developer had offered the reporter a p.r. job on his staff (which Furney subsequently took). "My education is in public relations," Furney was quoted as saying in the Wilmington, North Carolina, *Morning Star*, which in an April 16 story revealed the whole unwholesome tale. "This is what I've always wanted to do."

Laurel: to *The Denver Post*, for a myth-dispelling report on that sensational story of the '80s, the phenomenon of missing kids. Tracking the careless computations that exaggerated the numbers of truly abducted children, the role of the media in feeding public fears, and the exploitation of those fears by businesses with a commercial stake in keeping the story alive, the *Post*'s May 12 analysis set new directions for covering a tragedy that is, in fact, relatively rare.

Dart: to *The Washington Post*, for double-take journalism. A nine-inch story by Patrice Gaines-Carter on July 23 appeared to provide a full factual account of Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan's speech the previous evening to 10,000 people at the capital's Convention Center ostensibly promoting an economic program for blacks (FARRAKHAN'S SPEECH DRAWS LARGE CROWD), but it was not until July 25 that readers learned from a piece by columnist Courtland Milloy in the District Weekly section that the most newsworthy part of Farrakhan's message had been the roaring enthusiasm with which the audience had responded to his mockery of the Holocaust and his Hitler-like attacks on "the wickedness" of Jews. (In an outraged editorial on July 26 headlined FARRAKHAN BIGOTRY UNCHALLENGED, the *Post* confronted head-on Farrakhan's "streams of vicious anti-Semitic comments," "disgusting sermons," "preachings of hatred," and "garbage.")

Dart: to the Michigan Press Association, for a singularly inappropriate item in its May 29 newsletter. Along with helpful material on libel law, postal problems, and labor issues, the association's "Confidential Bulletin" offered its publisher members how-to advice on advertorial design, to wit: ads should look as much as possible like a news article, handy-hints column, or testimonial; typeface and format should be as similar as possible to the print medium in which the ad will run; the advertiser's logo should be buried in headline or text rather than placed at the bottom of an ad, where, the newsletter observed, "it's a dead giveaway."

Dart: to *Newsweek*, for a questionable rush to judgment, as expressed by its June 10 cover on the Walker spy case. Although the inside story was carefully tempered with "allegedly," "conceivably," "reportedly," and "may have," no such qualifiers softened the impact of A FAMILY OF SPIES, the magazine's two-inch-high coverline over individual photos of the three arrested — but as yet untried, let alone convicted — men.

Dart: to *USA Today*, for being a little too quick on the editorial draw. Readers lured by a page-one teaser (complete with photo) to a four-page inside package on actor Clint Eastwood and his upcoming western, *Pale Rider* (weekend edition, June 21-23), found that the paper hadn't been shooting quite straight: the promised pages, "5-8d," turned out to be a "Warner Brothers Special Advertising Section" announcing the film's debut.

Dart: to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, for the dubious distinction of earning more dart nominations during a two-month period than any publication in recent Dart Department memory. Among the lapses: (1) The debatable headline CHANNEL 5'S LOSS over a June 17 report that TV personality Nancy Merrill had quit her WMAQ job in frustration over lack of promotion and exposure. (Merrill is married to *Sun-Times* publisher Robert Page.) (2) A page-one box (June 15) abjectly apologizing to local Cadillac dealer Hanley Dawson for having published a perfectly legitimate cartoon satirizing Dawson's testimony, in the corruption trial of a traffic-court judge, that he had given the judge and his wife free Caddies to drive in exchange for regular disposal of traffic tickets accumulated by Dawson's car-leasing customers. (Hanley Dawson Cadillac is one of the paper's largest advertisers.) (3) A June 11 account of that same corruption trial that managed to bury until the penultimate paragraph (of a thirteen-paragraph piece on an inside page) the further testimony of car-dealer Dawson that he had furnished several media types with the free use of Cadillacs in exchange for free publicity — including columnist Irv Kupcinet, a *Sun-Times* fixture for the past forty years. (For a full account of the "cuffo" story, see the June 26 *Variety*, which gave it front-page play.) (4) A sophomoric July 22 picture item on its archival's printers' strike whose caption began, "An unidentified Tribune employee appears to be somewhat baffled as he crosses Tribune typographical union strike lines Friday. . . ." The "unidentified employee" was a fully recognizable Mike Royko, the well-known Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist who left the *Sun-Times* in protest against its sale to Rupert Murdoch last year. ■

A story of triumph and trauma.



IWO JIMA - 1945



NEW YORK - 1955



UNITED NATIONS - 1960



WASHINGTON - 1961



SAN FRANCISCO - 1965



CHINA - 1971



POW RETURNS, TRAVIS AFB - 1973



WASHINGTON - 1978



IRAN - 1979



HOUSTON - 1983



WASHINGTON - 1985

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When the numbers get this big, they tend to get meaningless. Until you look at it this way. If federal deficits continue at their current rate, it's as if every baby born in 1985 will have a \$50,000 debt strapped to its back.

The great debate over deficits, of course, no longer centers on whether or not they should be reduced, but how.

One side favors raising taxes. But whose? 90% of all personal taxable income already comes from tax brackets of \$35,000 and below. Does anyone seriously suggest increasing the tax burden of lower and middle income families?

Well then, the argument follows, tax the rich. But, if the federal government took every penny of every dollar over the \$75,000 tax bracket that isn't already taxed—not

a surcharge, mind you, but took it all—it would only collect enough to run the country for a week. Besides, there's no guarantee that Congress would spend less money if we all gave them more.

The alternative seems clear. Cut spending. But, again, the question is how.

We're W.R. Grace & Co. While our business interests in chemicals, natural resources and consumer

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Unfortunately, almost 75% of the commission's recommendations won't be implemented unless Congress acts on them. And, sometimes, the words "Congressional action" are mutually exclusive. That's why we all have to take action first.

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Our children and grandchildren don't deserve to pay for our mistakes. We should be passing on to them a healthy economy and a high standard of living. That should be their inheritance. That should be their birthright.

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UPI's disaster story

What went on — and what went wrong

by KATHARINE SEELYE and LAWRENCE ROBERTS

Three months after he had become part owner of United Press International, William E. Geissler was still brimming with excitement and plans. So when he ran into an editor from the foreign desk outside the company's world headquarters in New York one warm September day, he welcomed the chance to brag. Standing on the corner of 42nd Street and Lexington Avenue, Geissler put his briefcase down on the subway grate and, as the trains rumbled underfoot, launched into an animated monologue about UPI's bright future. "We stood there talking for about forty minutes," the editor recalls. "He talked about how great things were going to be. And at the end the words he used were something like, 'Someday there will be no Associated Press. We're going to run them out of business.'"

Such hyperbole was a hallmark of Geissler and his partner, Douglas F. Ruhe, the self-styled media entrepreneurs who acquired the world's second-largest wire service from the E. W. Scripps Company in June 1982 (see "How Scripps Got Rid of a Hot Potato," page 32). Another hallmark was that things rarely turned out quite the way they were planned: rather than driving their chief competitor out of business, the two presided over the financial collapse of UPI. In less than three years the company landed in bankruptcy court with \$45 million in liabilities, leaving a crippled news operation and a lot of questions about how it all happened.

What follows is a reconstruction, based on dozens of interviews over several months, of the jolting roller-coaster ride on which UPI management took its more than 1,200 domestic and foreign employees over the past three years. It is a tale of naiveté and pie-in-the-sky optimism brought down to earth by a desperate need for cash; of a company

that poured millions into questionable ventures that have yet to yield dividends, then "raised" money by not turning over to the IRS its employees' withholding taxes; of an ambitious company chairman who, after vanquishing the owners and taking a big raise, asked the staff for a wage freeze and additional economic concessions. It is a story of men whose dealings diminished the effectiveness of an organization that for seventy-five years had been a respected disseminator of news to hundreds of millions of people all over the world — dealings that were brought to national attention in a story sent out over the service's own news wires. And, finally, it is a cautionary tale that makes clear how fragile is the life of a news service that, if nothing else, has served to keep the much larger and better-financed Associated Press on its toes while providing editors a chance to compare separate accounts and come to their own conclusions regarding the nature of a story.

Euphoria . . . and early worries

From the very start, Ruhe and Geissler were on the defensive. They were young — Ruhe was thirty-seven, Geissler thirty-five — they were unknown, they came from unorthodox backgrounds, and Ruhe had a knack for undiplomatic candor, as when he told a newspaper convention that UPI offered no advantage over the AP. To bolster their credibility in the journalism community, the two quickly brought in men with established credentials — Bill Small, former head of NBC News, as president, and Maxwell McCrohon, former editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, as editor-in-chief.

Skepticism among the staff was gradually allayed as the owners ticked off ideas for new ventures, injecting purpose and excitement into a company that had been sleepwalking for years. Small opened more than twenty new bureaus. He subsequently named regional science and business editors, beefed up the investigative, sports, feature, and graphics departments, and set up a city news service in Los Angeles. True, in early 1983 UPI laid off more than fifty middle-

Katharine Seelye is an editor at The Philadelphia Inquirer. Lawrence Roberts, a free-lance writer living in Boston, resigned in January as UPI bureau chief in Madrid.



The optimists: Douglas F. Ruhe (left) and William E. Geissler thought they could turn a money-losing company into a profit maker and, in their view, they succeeded. Others, however, think their tenure was disastrous.

level managers, but with the money thus saved it hired reporters in the field. And in time there was a perception that the basic news service was on the upswing.

On an overseas inspection tour, Small told UPI news executives in London, "I never want to hear the excuse that a story wasn't properly covered for lack of money" — music to the ears of editors perennially urged to "downhold" expenses. In a coup, Small was able to sign The Times Mirror Company to a full-service agreement covering all of the chain's papers. This was the largest such contract in UPI's history.

"Suddenly there was a euphoric feeling," one former sales executive recalls. "The marketing people really felt the company now had a fighting chance." With an increased sales staff, the total value of contracts signed in 1983 was more than twice that of the previous year, hitting \$16 million. It would double again in 1984.

But not everyone was euphoric. Len R. ("Rob") Small and Cordell Overgaard, two minority shareholders who had been brought in before the acquisition, were among the first to perceive that Ruhe and Geissler were in over their heads and seemed unwilling to confront key problems.

One of the owners' first obligations was to negotiate a contract with the Wire Service Guild. Rob Small, who is not related to Bill Small, says that Geissler, who negotiated the contract "unilaterally," wanted to raise wages because he thought journalists should make more money. By UPI's standards, the wage increase — 20 percent over three years — was generous, providing editorial employees parity with their counterparts at the AP for the first time in decades.

But Small, who was worried about the company's financial situation, was troubled by the contract, and he cites it today as one of the reasons he left UPI. "It is very difficult to have a cost-control program without addressing the issue of wages," he says.

Small had further cause for concern when, in late 1982, International Management Consultants, a New York firm that specializes in turning around ailing companies, handed in its situation report. "We were already worried," Small recalls. "Then their predictions said we were running out of cash." To save money the report recommended that the company immediately fire 400 editorial employees, according to Ruhe, who adds that, in the face of enormous pressure from UPI managers not to make the cuts, he rejected the consultants' advice. To Rob Small and other executives, this was just one more indication that there was no realistic strategy for putting UPI on track. Ruhe and Geissler "had tenacity, energy, street smarts, charisma, and some classic entrepreneurial skills," says Small, who is back behind his desk at the Moline, Illinois, *Daily Dispatch*, of which he is editor and publisher. "But the key was that they lacked a sense of organization, of priorities, a sense of urgency. They didn't know the big problems from the little problems, and we had a big problem — the meter was running." The company was losing \$1 million a month.

In mid-January 1983, Small and Overgaard decided to confront Ruhe and Geissler with what they saw as the company's problems and to vent their dissatisfaction. On January 26, at a meeting in Ruhe's room at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York, they told Ruhe and Geissler that the company needed between \$6 million and \$15 million. Ruhe disagreed. Then, Small recalls, "I tried to get across to Doug [Ruhe] that he was a creative, imaginative guy but that we needed a more methodical person to run things. He wasn't interested. He just shook his head. There wasn't that much dialogue. Cordy and I said we would step aside. There wasn't a big fight." Says Overgaard: "I think their reaction was one of relief."

Rob Small and Cordell Overgaard, who had been with UPI for only seven months, bowed out.

The cash crunch and the 'idiotic' Reuters deal

One day near the end of that year, UPI president Bill Small received an odd telephone call from a friend, a vice-president of the Tribune Company in Chicago. He hated to bother Small about it, he said, since it was only a matter of a few hundred dollars, but the Tribune Company could not seem to get UPI to pay for the daily delivery of newspapers to the Chicago bureau.

In 1984 a cash shortage became increasingly apparent — and embarrassing. Telephones in some bureaus were intermittently cut off for nonpayment of bills. Reporters who had paid for travel and lodging out of their own pockets were not being reimbursed. Stringers, fed up with the long delays in their payments, began drifting off to the competition. American Express cards issued to executives and bureau chiefs were canceled. Clients abroad were running out of paper for their photo machines and could not get UPI to ship more. What cash there was, it seemed, was being wasted. A new Spanish-language radio-news network for U.S. Hispanic stations sucked up nearly \$2 million and produced no revenue. The installation of satellite dishes for clients was handled so haphazardly that in some states the land lines were inadvertently left in place, forcing UPI to pay for two parallel delivery systems.

The plan to move UPI's operational and corporate headquarters out of New York turned into a fiasco. The owners wanted to move the corporate offices to Brentwood, Tennessee, near their own homes in suburban Nashville, and they hoped to increase efficiency and save money by putting all the news and photo desks under one roof at a new world headquarters in Washington.

At first, the owners worked out what Ruhe termed a "creative financing" scheme, which they believed would yield them the ownership of a renovated office building near Farragut Square in Washington — for no cash. The owners spent at least \$100,000 and several months on plans to remodel the building, Ruhe says. Then the developer with whom they were working went bankrupt. The company hastily looked around for another building, finding one at 14th and I Streets, across from a block of sex shops.

The problems did not stop there. Expensive radio studios were built, only to be torn down and rebuilt because they had not been adequately soundproofed. Dozens of members of the New York staff had been told to give up their apartments and sell their houses in anticipation of moving, so when the move was delayed UPI had to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to put them up in hotels. Ruhe admits that these snafus cost the company roughly \$1 million.

Taken together, these signs were ominous indeed. Rumors of UPI's imminent collapse, which had been circulating since the late 1960s, were now taken so seriously that in the spring of 1984 Ruhe felt compelled to issue a company-wide memorandum. "The fact is," he stated in the May 18 memo, "that UPI is very much on track in its turnaround. . . . All of the vital indicators — improved sales, market share, news product, operations — are right

on target for profitability. . . . We're in business today, we'll be in business tomorrow, and very much in business next year."

A few days after this memo was issued, what was perhaps the last genuine display of optimism burst forth from the ninth floor of the new Washington headquarters. Two top executives marched out of their offices waving little British flags and singing "God Save the Queen," while stunned secretaries looked on. The executives were celebrating the sale of UPI's overseas pictures division to Reuters, the British-owned news agency, for \$5.76 million.

In hindsight, this deal was viewed as one of the most foolish concluded under the Ruhe-Geissler management. The picture side was where UPI's aggressive, seat-of-the-pants style seemed to work best, and some editors rated it the most successful part of the company's operation. While UPI officials say that their own books were never sophisticated enough to determine whether Reuters obtained an independently profitable entity, many now argue that the price was absurdly low. For its money, Reuters received twenty-four functioning picture bureaus, dozens of experienced photographers, a working distribution system, millions of dollars in long-term client contracts, and a head start on Agence France-Press, which was also organizing a world-wide picture service.

"The picture deal was the most idiotic deal that was ever made," says Mike Hughes, executive editor and vice-president in charge of UPI's international division. "We gave it to them on a platter. Even if Reuters worked around the clock [to organize its own service] it would have taken them three years just to put all the transmitters in place. I'd say a conservative guess is that we saved them twenty million dollars and five years."

Risky businesses: from Focus to UPI

The decision to accept Reuters's price was made in a panic when UPI discovered it did not have enough cash to meet both the payroll and a scheduled loan payment to Foothill Capital Corporation, a Los Angeles firm. The picture sale

Short-term partner: After just seven months with UPI, publisher Len Small returned to his Illinois newspaper.



courtesy The Daily Dispatch



Some deal: Pressed for cash, Ruhe (right) sold UPI's overseas pictures division to Reuters in May 1984 for \$5.76 million.

was "a crisis move," in the words of one high-ranking executive. "We had to have that money by Friday."

For Ruhe and Geissler, such hand-to-mouth financing was standard operating procedure. This becomes clear from a look at how they managed the one television station they owned before coming to UPI.

It was a struggle just to get their UHF station — WFBN in Joliet, Illinois — on the air. First, they had to raise money. When they couldn't get enough from friends and relatives, they had to sign for substantial loans. According to papers filed with the Federal Communications Commission, it took them two years — from 1978, when they formed Focus Broadcasting Company, to 1980 — to obtain a license; a third year passed before the station went on the air. "Unfortunately," Ruhe wrote in a February 27, 1981, affidavit, "the many obligations we have incurred to get this far are falling due faster than we can meet them. . . . We are already stretched to the financial breaking point by the debts we have incurred in trying to put Channel 66 on the air."

When Focus could not afford to operate WFBN as an independent station, the company ran it as a pay-TV service, taking on a series of subscription operators. During the changeover from one group to another, Ruhe says, the incoming operators did not want their air time "interrupted" by news, so the station canceled its locally produced 6 P.M. newscast. When one of the station's klystron tubes failed, the station was left to limp along at half its authorized megawattage.

Nonetheless, Ruhe and Geissler continued to apply for more television licenses, knowing full well the difficulties and expenses involved. By the summer of 1985 Focus's broadcast interests had been expanded — through a thicket of complicated transactions involving cross-ownerships among relatives, friends, and business associates — to include three other stations. Like the Joliet station, none has turned a profit.

It was shortly after they had arranged their house-of-cards financing for Focus that Ruhe and Geissler acquired UPI. To put the wire service on a more solid footing they sought funds from more than 100 investors. None materialized. Yet Ruhe persisted. "It is a creative challenge to figure out how to get from here to there and survive," he says now, trying to explain why he plunges into ventures for which he has

insufficient funds. "I can make my living at other things, but I'm not happy in a risk-free situation."

The \$2.3 million question

The situation at UPI was certainly not risk-free. The new owners inherited a money-losing company and they could never stick to an orderly strategy for stemming the losses and raising new capital. In fact, Ruhe and Geissler seemed to spend money so freely — "they could find more useless ways to dissipate cash than a normal person could think of," says one insider — that in short order they were desperate for cash. To meet payments, they took out a \$3 million loan from Barclays. But to carry out certain transactions designed to raise quick cash, they replaced the Barclays contract with a \$4.8 million loan from Foothill Capital at a higher interest rate. The rate, according to Ruhe, ranged up to 25 percent. Although they gave their personal guarantees for the Barclays and the Foothill loans, they never invested any of their own money in UPI. (Ruhe says that, as a result of their television holdings, he and Geissler are worth \$6 million to \$10 million each.) Instead, the owners patched together a number of short-sighted transactions, like the sale of the overseas pictures division to Reuters, that undermined UPI's value. They sold off several properties — among them, UPI's half interest in the international commodity news service, Unicom; its one-third share of the television film company UPITN; its New York photo archives; its data base; and rights to its electronic transmission system providing news for cable television and personal computers. In addition, they set up more than a dozen little spinoffs, with names such as UPI Focus, UPI Ask, UPI Media, UPI Real Estate, and DataServe. Yet UPI itself seemed to be receiving very little in return.

The nature and extent of these various activities began to emerge after the company filed on April 28, 1985, for protection from its creditors under Chapter Eleven of the U.S. bankruptcy code, claiming \$45 million in liabilities.

Papers filed in bankruptcy court in Washington revealed, for example, that UPI had kept money that should have gone to the Internal Revenue Service, to the employee credit union, and for employee health insurance and union dues. And it had pocketed collections from overseas clients for comic strips such as Peanuts and Garfield, collections that, as the agent for United Feature Syndicate, UPI should have sent on to the syndicate.

A week after the filing, UPI investigative reporter Gregory Gordon moved a story on the UPI wire outlining publicly for the first time what a number of UPI employees had suspected all along: "United Press International's chief owners," Gordon wrote, "reneged on a pledge to invest \$2 million in the wire service and channeled millions of dollars of scarce company funds into questionable venture deals, present and former UPI officials say. . . . Ruhe and Geissler . . . also paid \$2.3 million to their own management company and hundreds of thousands of dollars to consultants who provided no useful products."

The *Nashville Banner* chimed in with hard-hitting stories

of its own: "In times of desperation . . .," wrote Cathy Schulze on May 14, "Focus officials and others in a complex web of subsidiaries would merely telephone officials at UPI and ask for money. Up until last fall . . . cash would be transferred to them by wire."

Ruhe denied the charges. He told Gordon, for example, that the "pledge" to invest \$2 million had been contingent upon the sale of the Joliet station — a sale that has yet to materialize.

And recently, during the course of a seven-hour interview, Ruhe once again denied the charges. He insisted vehemently that there was nothing illegal or unethical about the \$2.3 million payment from UPI to Focus. (An audit being conducted by creditors in the bankruptcy proceeding is examining this payment; as of this writing, no conclusion has been reached and no charges have been filed against anyone.) Ruhe said the \$2.3 million covered "fees" paid over three years to Focus, whose seven to fifteen employees ultimately "saved" UPI. A small amount, he added, "probably" ended up paying for functions unrelated to UPI during a one-year "transition period" when Focus's management of its handful of television stations overlapped with its management of UPI. Ruhe would not list the specific services that "saved" UPI beyond saying, "We turned the company around. . . . It was losing a million and a half dollars a month; it's now cash-flow positive."

Geissler, like Ruhe, dismisses any suggestion of wrongdoing. "It's all froth," he asserts, "and it's all beside the point." In the future, Geissler goes on to say, criticism that he and Ruhe mismanaged the company "won't even be a footnote."

Enter Nogales; exit Ruhe and Geissler

By September 1984, however, when UPI was asking its employees to take a 25 percent wage cut, the perception that Ruhe and Geissler had mismanaged the company was pervasive. And it eventually cost them control of the company. Through some deft behind-the-scenes maneuvering, the man to emerge with the power was Luis G. Nogales.

The son of migrant farm workers in California, Nogales had gone to Stanford Law School and had become an executive with Golden West Broadcasting — where, through business dealings with the Joliet station, he met Ruhe and Geissler. A year after they took over UPI, they hired Nogales as executive vice-president.

Nogales, then forty-one, and president Bill Small, then fifty-six, viewed each other as rivals from day one. Within a year, Nogales had won the confidence of the owners, as Small never had. He was made general manager in August 1984. In early September, shortly after UPI's financial woes were made public, Ruhe called Small to Nashville. There, he told him that he wanted to cut short his contract, scheduled to run until 1989.

That weekend Small learned that his dismissal had already been announced in a UPI story. On the advice of his lawyer, he continued to report to his New York office. When UPI officials had the lock changed, Small entered through a side door; UPI then called a security guard, but Small refused to leave without a written notice of his firing. He later filed

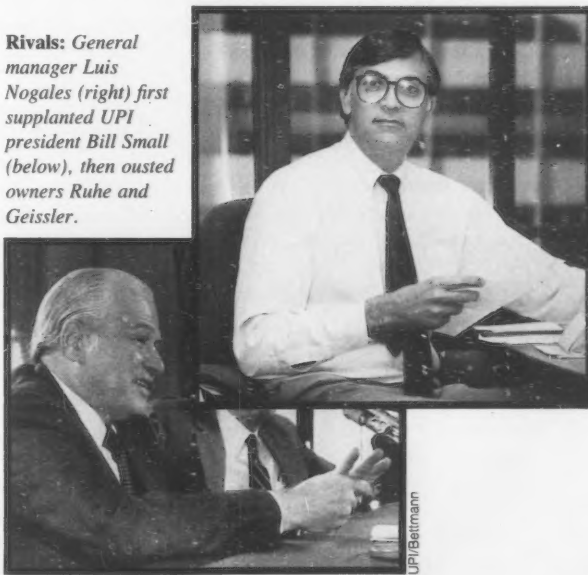
a multi-million-dollar breach-of-contract suit, which is still pending.

The owners and their new president were faced with the task of keeping UPI operating despite a severe cash crunch. Ruhe says he and Nogales came to an agreement about how to do it: "Luis was supposed to be controlling costs, and I was supposed to bring in the cash by making the deals."

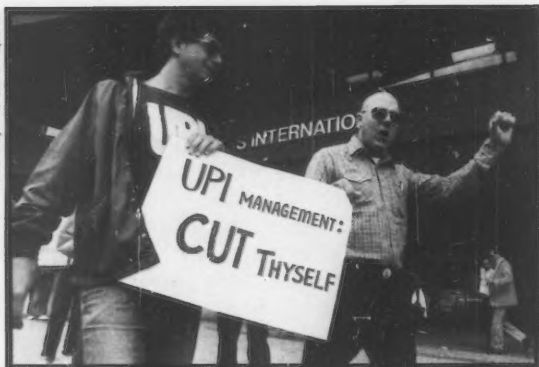
Before long, however, their relationship began to fray. Nogales, saying Foothill Capital had "lost confidence" in Ruhe and Geissler, joined the lender in March to force them out. Foothill officials presented them, in effect, with an ultimatum: appoint Nogales chairman or lose Foothill funding. Instead, Ruhe and Geissler fired Nogales, intending to replace him with William C. Payette, a respected ex-UPI man and former head of United Feature Syndicate. But their rebellion was short-lived: the need for Foothill's cash forced them to take back Nogales and relinquish control. In May, Ruhe and Geissler made an attempt to reassert their authority and for a few weeks it was unclear just who was in charge. Nogales eventually came out on top.

Ruhe still fumes over what he calls the "coup," charging that Nogales "stole" the company from him and Geissler. He says Nogales managed to paint a picture of Ruhe and Geissler as inept and corrupt so that he could "justify" taking control. Ruhe acknowledges that Nogales's charges were "given credence because of the cloud that hung over us from day one." But, he contends, it was Nogales who hurt the company more by taking it into bankruptcy court, an unnecessary step, he says, taken not for financial reasons but simply so that Nogales could gain control. The company did not have to risk the stigma of bankruptcy at that point, Ruhe argues, because by that time it had achieved an operating profit — for the last quarter of 1984 and the first quarter of 1985 — its first in twenty-two years. (That profit,

Rivals: General manager Luis Nogales (right) first supplanted UPI president Bill Small (below), then ousted owners Ruhe and Geissler.



C.J./Harlee Little



The Guild militant: In June, when UPI called on employees for more concessions, the Guild suggested cutting back elsewhere.

of course, was made possible in part by the employees' extraordinary decision to take a 25 percent wage cut.)

At first, UPI employees supported Nogales, whose chief appeal seemed to be that he was against the owners. But the honeymoon did not last long.

The firing line

On Saturday morning, April 27, 1985, one day before UPI filed for bankruptcy-court protection, Jerry McGinn, the UPI bureau manager in Spokane, Washington, was lying in bed, feeling that life was good. As a speaker at a roast in honor of a high school football coach the night before, he had been a success, and his wife had promised to bring him breakfast in bed. "Up she came with a tray of food, flowers, and all that," McGinn recalls. "On top of the plates was a telegram. So I asked her, 'What's that — a joke about last night?' 'I don't know,' she says. 'Why don't you open it?' I did. And it said, 'You're fired, terminated as of April 26.' So that was my breakfast in bed."

McGinn, thirty-nine, who had been with UPI for twenty-one years, was one of about eighty U.S. editorial employees who received identical telegrams. The cutbacks closed eleven U.S. bureaus, leaving nine states to be covered by only one reporter each.

Among those who felt that the episode was an insult to employees — who had kept the wire going despite the 25 percent wage cut — was Steven Christensen, editor of the ten-state Pacific division. He resigned in protest.

Christensen and other editors had been told weeks earlier to expect another round of layoffs. But when he came to work that Friday in San Francisco, word had already spread that UPI was about to go into bankruptcy. That afternoon, he was hooked into a nationwide conference call with other division editors and executives.

"We were informed that the staff cuts we had been told about, plus deeper ones, had to take place immediately, that the notices would be sent by Western Union that night," Christensen recalls. "It was Bobby Ray Miller [vice president for labor relations] who told us, said he had been ordered, to get the names of those to be fired."

Nogales, who handed down the order, says that he had to demand the cuts be made immediately because division

managers had failed to make them before. "When I showed up in Los Angeles to negotiate with Foothill and I had not accomplished those reductions, they questioned whether I could ever get it done," Nogales says. The dismissals yielded "a positive cash flow" and appeased Foothill. He adds, "Why would anybody lend you money if you can't show that you can repay it? That's something this institution needs to learn — there isn't anybody out there that's going to give you funding every year because you're such a hot-shot UPI collecting the news for the benefit of the world. You live within your budget."

Christensen was ordered to cut fifteen of the 123 people in his division, which had lost twenty others in the fall of 1984. He says that he felt obligated to make the choices, but then resigned that night to protest unfairness not only to the reporters but to the clients as well.

"One of my concerns," Christensen says, "was that laying off fifteen more people in the division caused some real reductions in the service. The clients were going to receive a much smaller service on Monday than they had on Friday."

Around the country, UPI staff members concluded that they no longer had time for anything but the bigger stories. The layoffs and cash problems left many areas inadequately covered. When Karen Ann Quinlan died in New Jersey on the night of June 11, after having lain in a coma for ten years, no UPI staffer was on duty in the state and UPI was far behind on the breaking story. When on May 31 tornadoes swept through Pennsylvania, Ohio, and western New York, killing eighty-nine people, the usual UPI photo stringers, owed back pay, refused the summons to help out.

UPI's share of the play on many of the major national and international stories remained good, editors say, a tribute to the service's characteristic hustle, and its sports, features, and graphics departments remained strong. Even so, morale was abysmal. On at least two occasions paychecks bounced before the company could cover them. The White House refused to allow UPI reporters to accompany President Reagan to Europe this spring without cash up front; the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* covered the payment.

Clients were certainly aware of the problems, and this showed in cancellations. "The business has been evaporating at a rate you would not believe," says a high-ranking executive. "The company is daily bleeding to death." Another UPI official says that once the company filed for bankruptcy-court protection, clients were "concerned that UPI was going out of business." Small newspapers that took UPI as their only service were especially worried.

Typical was the 13,600-circulation Flagstaff, Arizona, *Daily Sun*. "Our state coverage is probably a lot more incomplete because there's no depth in the report," admits managing editor Richard N. Velotta. "We're not getting as much as we were. To give them credit, they [UPI reporters] are working their butts off, but no amount of hard work can make up for their problems. They've lost a lot of stringers in the outlying areas, and it's impossible for them to keep

as good a pulse on things. AP now outstuffs UPI by as much as three to one. In fact, they've hired away some of UPI's best people. Simple mathematics says they're going to have better coverage."

The AP has benefited from UPI's problems, enjoying an unusually large increase of at least fifty newspapers in the first six months of 1985. The AP sales pitch regarding the uncertain future of UPI has been "subtle," says Velotta. "They just hint at it, saying things like, 'Gee, I wonder what's going to happen to them tomorrow?'"

By this summer UPI was suffering a dramatic loss of clients, most of them radio stations. As their contracts come up for renewal, clients routinely give notice that they are going to cancel, with the expectation that they can bargain for a better deal. Normally, UPI saves about 70 percent of those who give notice, but by June, according to a UPI sales executive, UPI was receiving about twenty cancellations a week and was saving only about 30 percent of them. Moreover, new business had all but dried up. Still, UPI officials maintain that UPI can survive as long as the larger newspapers and broadcasters, which provide most of the revenue, continue to take its service. And, with a few exceptions, most of them are retaining UPI and paying a special 9.9 percent rate increase that the agency asked for last March. "Some people are going to think it's more productive to spend the money they spend on UPI elsewhere," says Gil Spencer, editor of the *New York Daily News*. "But we'll hang on if they can. I think it's nice to have a competitive situation."

Down to the wire

Within UPI, with the owners out of the fray, tension was rising between Nogales and the employees. In June, when Nogales asked the Wire Service Guild for an additional \$1.1 million in economic concessions, it came out that he had taken a 90 percent raise, to \$171,000—shortly before filing for bankruptcy court protection. (Nogales explains that as CEO his salary could not be less than that of the editor-in-chief and that he needed money for constant legal advice.) Deep resentment among the employees, together with unexpectedly strong resistance to the concessions, forced Nogales in mid-July to cut his salary by 25 percent. Still, the union refused to discuss the concessions, saying that UPI was withholding financial information, and on July 19 Nogales asked the bankruptcy court to reject UPI's contract with the Guild. In response, the union asked employees for authorization to call a strike. As of this writing, the court had turned the dispute over to a federal mediator.

While fighting the union, Nogales was also trying to undo some of the damage done by the two owners—exploring ways of reclaiming assets and recouping funds. For example, he sent a bill for \$1.8 million to a company called Fintext, in Glens Falls, New York. Fintext, using half the monthly fees that UPI clients paid for their stock-reporting service, was supposed to develop a state-of-the-art stock report by June 1984. More than a year later, however, Fintext had produced little more than a ream of questionable loans and payments. (Ruhe, who defends the investment, and maintains that the system will be valuable to UPI, says

he expects it to be phased in late this summer.)

In exile in Nashville, Ruhe and Geissler appeared to be left out in the cold, with nothing to do but wait for the creditors and managers to sell their company out from under them. But, as was often the case with the two partners, things were not exactly as they seemed. They still had a hold on the company's future. Exercising their right as owners, Ruhe and Geissler had, early on, transferred UPI's tax credits for post-1982 operating losses to their holding company, Media News Corporation. Ruhe says that he and Geissler planned to use the credits as a bargaining chip to retain a minority interest in UPI if it were ever sold. The \$35 million credit, which could be used to reduce taxes should UPI make a profit in the future, may be one of the company's most valuable assets to a buyer.

In the midst of all the maneuverings, there was one ray of kindly light: Judge George Bason, Jr., was assigned to preside over the bankruptcy case and Bason was guided by an appreciation of the special role of the company that was in disarray before him. As his early rulings made clear, he was sympathetic to the idea of maintaining a second wire service. So sympathetic, in fact, that he ruled that UPI should use its limited cash to keep employees' health benefits up to date rather than pay the back taxes it owed the IRS.

"This court finds the First Amendment is a tremendous and powerful reason" for denying the claim by the IRS, he wrote on May 15. In his decision, he cited "the primary importance of preserving a free press . . . the concept that a free press is essential to a free democratic government."

But if UPI is to survive and flourish, it will need more than the help of an understanding judge. For one thing, it must diversify. Part of its underlying financial weakness is that it has failed to anticipate and adapt to basic changes in the news business. As a wholesaler of news, UPI stood around idly while newspapers, the main retailers of news and the chief source of the agency's revenue, dwindled in number and evolved technologically. UPI took little note of how Reuters, which had also faced financial problems about fifteen years ago, had confronted these challenges and diversified into news services, mainly dealing with highly specialized financial news, which it sold directly to banks and other businesses. Reuters, robust today, receives 95 percent of its revenue by providing financial information to the business community. The AP, moving slowly but steadily in the same direction, now receives 10 percent of its income from such sources. But UPI is still lagging behind at 8 percent, an amount so small, says a UPI official, that "it is hardly ever factored in."

If UPI were ever to gain some credible leadership, a leadership possessed of a vision of the future that doesn't sacrifice the news report, it might spare the journalistic community the tortured debate over whether two wire services are really necessary. Of course they are. Two sources are always better than one. But haphazard management and antics like those of the last three years have given American newspaper publishers a good excuse to think they can manage just fine without one of them.

How Scripps got rid of a hot potato

The acquisition of UPI by Douglas F. Ruhe and William E. Geissler in June 1982 was a puzzle to the news industry. Former 1960s political activists and adherents of the Baha'i faith, the two men were little known outside of Nashville, where they owned a firm called Focus Communications whose chief asset was a struggling television station in Joliet, Illinois. They were not exactly the sort of people whom the E. W. Scripps Company, UPI's corporate parent, had been looking for to take the financially ailing news service under their wing.

But UPI was losing approximately \$1 million a month, and while U.S. news organizations were generally unhappy about the prospect of UPI's going under, they had proved unwilling to pay the cost of keeping it afloat. Scripps had simply reached the end of its rope. "By the time Ruhe and Geissler came along," says a former UPI executive, "UPI had become such a hot potato that they were ready to toss it to anyone who would grab it."



The Founder: E. W. Scripps

UPI's forerunner, United Press, was founded in 1907 by Edward Wyllis Scripps, a freewheeling midwestern publisher, for the express purpose of making a wire service available to all. In defiance of the powerful Associated Press cartel — an exclusive club that could blackball dailies that competed with its members — Scripps offered his service to anyone who could pay for it.

The AP was and remains a publishers' cooperative that simply bills its members for expenses. UP, by contrast, had clients, not members, and had to dig into its own pocket to cover any losses. And because UP was much smaller it had to undersell its rival to stay in the game.

Both wire services flourished through World War II. Then came an event that, according to Roger Tatarian, who retired in 1972 as editor of UPI, "changed the entire nature of news-agency competition." In 1945, in response to an antitrust suit filed by the Justice Department, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the AP could not deny its service to anyone. With every paper now able to get AP, UP had to fight harder for clients.

Still, for more than fifteen years UP continued to show a profit. At its peak in the early 1960s, by which time it had merged with Hearst's faltering International News Service to become UPI, the agency had nearly 6,000 domestic clients, including more than 1,000 newspapers. But faced with a steady decline in the number of U.S. dailies, and with stiff competition from new, supplemental news services, UPI began losing both money and clients. By the time Ruhe and Geissler took over, the agency had only about

4,200 domestic clients, fewer than 800 of which were newspapers. AP, by contrast, had about 7,000 domestic clients, including nearly 1,200 newspapers.

UPI's difficulties can be charged in part to its parent company. E.W. Scripps was a profitable conglomerate whose assets included fourteen metropolitan dailies, but it ran UPI with a legendary cheapness when it came to salaries, supplies, and facilities. In the 1970s, although Scripps helped UPI out with lines of credit, it generally reacted to client losses by demanding cuts in staffing, which in turn resulted in more client losses.

Furthermore, says one former executive, "they never encouraged new concepts. After a while you just didn't try." One glaring example of shortsightedness had to do with the plan by both wire services in the late 1970s to switch from expensive phone lines to satellites for transmitting news to customers. This required outfitting each client with a receiving dish. AP supplied the dishes free, but Scripps refused to put the necessary \$20 million up front. "With that twenty million dollars you could have saved six million in one year," the former executive says. "Instead, we went with a half-assed program of having the client buy the dish. So you ended up with some clients in an area on satellite and others on land lines. We ended up with two delivery systems that were costing us a fortune."

In 1978, after much agonizing, the Scripps board of directors voted to re-examine the company's ownership of UPI. "We didn't specify sale as the mandated solution," says board chairman Charles E. Scripps, a grandson of the founder. "But we did specify that something be done."

The company looked first to the journalistic community. Scripps executives figured that support from a consortium of three dozen news organizations could keep UPI in business, and it won pledges from about two-thirds of the necessary number. But some of the biggest organizations — The New York Times Company, The Times-Mirror Company, and Knight-Ridder Newspapers among them — balked, saying they could not persuade their stockholders to invest in an ailing enterprise.

Though disappointed, Scripps didn't give up. According to Roderick W. Beaton, who was president of UPI for ten years until his retirement in 1982, the company "went to a group of the biggest publishers in the country and had a private meeting with them in New York and put it to them cold turkey: 'What do you fellas want to do about it?' And no one raised their hand. No one said anything. . . .

"If I were a Scripps," says Beaton (who was not at the meeting), "I'd have to say to myself, Why am I the sucker? Why am I the mule being kicked?"

In 1980, hoping to find a buyer with a sound plan for keeping the agency operating, Scripps hired First Boston Corporation as its financial agent and put UPI on the block. Enter Ruhe and Geissler, who had only just managed to put their Joliet TV station on the air. "UPI fit our plans for the future," says Ruhe. "We saw the possibility of creating

[with UPI] a mini-network of TV stations and some small broadcast and news organizations." Admitting that they knew nothing about the wire-service business, he says, "We thought it was worth a stab."

So in 1981 Ruhe called up First Boston. But the firm would give him no information. "They said they were talking only to large companies," he recalls.

There were other, more legitimate suitors. Reuters, for one, was taking a serious look at UPI, tramping around to its bureaus and studying its news coverage. But in 1981, after a year of investigation, Reuters backed off.

With heavy losses accumulating and with no end in sight, Scripps executives grew more anxious. Adding to the company's concern was an awareness that time was running out on the Scripps Trust, owner of more than 80 percent of the stock of the E.W. Scripps Company. E.W. Scripps had set up the trust principally for the benefit of his four oldest grandchildren, all of whom are now over sixty years old. "The life of the trust is based on the four of us," Charles Scripps explains, "and when the last one of us is gone, the assets would be distributed among the heirs." If the company still owned UPI, and the heirs decided to fold the service, Scripps might have to shell out as much as \$60 million in severance pay and other shutdown costs. There was also some concern, according to insiders, that UPI's heavy losses could leave the Scripps trustees open to legal action by the heirs.

Meanwhile, Ruhe and Geissler, undaunted by the brush-off from First Boston, were moving in on their objective. "I had tried calling investment bankers, lawyers," Ruhe says. "I tried to get them to solicit information about UPI for 'unnamed clients' of theirs — that's very commonplace. In fact it's done every day, but First Boston said no."

Ruhe then took advantage of a happy coincidence. Geissler's wife, Judith, had been married to a man named Porter Bibb, who was now head of the communications and high-technology group in the investment banking division of Bankers Trust in New York. Ruhe and Geissler hired Bankers Trust for \$100,000 to represent them in the potential acquisition of UPI; Bibb then obtained First Boston's packet

of information, evaluated it, and served as Ruhe and Geissler's financial adviser. In February 1982, Ruhe sent a two-paragraph Mailgram to Charles Scripps, in which he proposed a simple cost-cutting plan: he would trim staff, complete the conversion from phone lines to satellites, and institute "aggressive marketing." He offered no cash.

According to one insider, the Mailgram arrived just after Reuters had withdrawn from negotiations. "I sent it on a Friday," says Ruhe, "and they called me on Monday. They said, 'We take this offer very seriously. We'd like you to come immediately to Cincinnati and talk with us to see if we can make a deal.' It moved very, very rapidly."

By this time Ruhe and Geissler had acquired some much-needed respectability in the world of print. Through Cordell Overgaard, the attorney for their television station, they had been brought together with Len R. "Rob" Small, editor and publisher of the Moline, Illinois, *Daily Dispatch* and heir to the family-run Small Newspaper Group. Edward W. Estlow, who recently retired as president and chief executive officer of Scripps, says that Small's being a part of the team made a big difference to him, easing his concern about its otherwise apparent lack of news expertise. Asked how thoroughly Ruhe and Geissler were investigated before the sale, Estlow says only: "There was due diligence." He adds, "We used good judgment in attempting to find responsible buyers. We had the opportunity to sell to a Swiss syndicate, with no names, a Middle Eastern group, a group from Algeria. We could have sold it to those kind of people overseas."

All parties agreed not to reveal that, in the end, Scripps actually gave the company away. The principals will not discuss the substance of the deal, but others in a position to know say it shaped up like this: Scripps paid an estimated \$5 million in cash into the company treasury, most of which was earmarked for specific debts that UPI owed. It paid an additional \$2.4 million into UPI's underfunded pension fund. And it threw in an estimated \$900,000 in lieu of certain tax credits which, under the terms of the acquisition, the new owners would not be able to claim. Contrary to published reports, the new owners did not hand over even a symbolic one-dollar bill. Even the \$100,000 that they owed Bankers Trust was to be paid by UPI. "In a sense," says Charles Scripps, "we filled up the gas tank and sold it that way. So they had some working capital."

But the new owners did not get everything they wanted. Scripps declined to transfer millions of dollars in pre-1982 tax credits that could have been used to reduce the taxes UPI would have to pay on any future profits.

For its part, Scripps hoped to be freed of any liability if UPI's creditors should force it into bankruptcy; in that event Scripps might be held responsible for paying off the agency's debts unless it could show it had made every effort to give UPI's new owners a reasonable chance of success. "It was not generosity as much as self-interest," says a source who was close to the negotiations. "The main consideration was that Scripps didn't want to get the business back in six months."

K.S. and L.R.

UPI AND AP COMPARED

	UPI	AP
Employees		
Domestic editorial	674	1,200
Domestic photo	96	150
Foreign editorial	200*	340
Foreign photo	0	150*
News bureaus		
Domestic	135	136
Foreign	52	83
Annual budget	\$100,000,000†	\$206,000,000
Domestic clients/members		
Newspaper	729	1,251
Broadcast	4,340	5,700
Pulitzer Prizes	10	34

* approximate

† estimated

Action News: the Philly formula

by PHILIP WEISS

For ten years the Philadelphia market for television news has been dominated by WPVI, Channel 6, the city's ABC affiliate. The 6 P.M. segment of WPVI's Action News often has one and a half times as many viewers as the two other local affiliates combined. In fact, recent ratings show the Action News audience at 6 P.M. to be close to a million viewers, eclipsing the numbers for news programs in New



both: CJB/Pamela Duffy

Jim Gardner:
This anchor's
been a fixture
for nine
years.

York and Los Angeles (whose markets are roughly double the size of Philadelphia's) and making Action News the most popular news show in the country.

How does Action News do it? "Everyone asks us that," says Richard Spinner, general sales manager. Surely one element in Channel 6's success is the exceptional loyalty of its staff. But then there's the program itself, fast-moving and shrewdly crafted. The best way to understand Action News is to watch it. Here's my diary from a couple of weeks in May and June.

May 27, 11 P.M. Action News comes on with a thumping series of images and rousing music. The pictures flash by: runners, a fisherman, police horses, a pizza spinning in the air, a disco, dancers in silvery spandex, baseball, a car being waxed, a kiss. Get with it now; some of the news items will go by nearly as fast. The mood is set: This is a dynamic area; our news involves you, the people.

May 27, 11:01 P.M. Jim Gardner, prematurely gray, with Walter Cronkite's cool, opens it up by brushing over two items with a phrase each — 40,000 in Bangladesh are feared dead in a cyclone, Mount St. Helens may erupt again — then says abruptly, "But the big news tonight . . ."

That's the Action News trademark. Every episode begins with two or three quick items followed by the announcement of "the big news" or "the big story." The formula's rigidity sticks out on a night like this, when the big story is the

discovery of a badly decomposed body in a car trunk in southwest Philadelphia. The footage is of that shadowy sort you get when TV lights shine on authorities in white shirts in the dark. The story's worse; tomorrow it will rate five inches on page B6 of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

But don't dismiss that decomposing body out of hand. It's been linked with the disasters that are a staple of the Action News world. To tune in Channel 6 is to have the tocsin of "tragedy" sounding daily in your ears ("It's been a weekend of tragedy in other parts of the world," Gardner will intone a little later, getting back to Bangladesh), and that anonymously decomposing body can be read as the show's ritualistic offering to the vague, encircling presence of tragedy. When Gardner has disposed of the body, it's time for celebration: a long and upbeat report about the weekend on the Jersey shore. Waves crash, bikini'd cleavages almost spill, boardwalk businessmen boast of their sales.

The rapid sequence of tragedy and joy occurs so frequently on Action News that you come to think of the show as a caveman and its audience as a desirable female; soon he will carry her back home and make love to her lingeringly, with torchlight on the walls, but first he must hit her over the head with a club.

May 29, noon. In a teaser for a magazine show called *Prime Time*, there is a hint of investigative reporting (the only hint of such reporting I catch during two weeks of Channel 6 watching).

The show will look into "shopping-cart abuse, the scandal that won't go away."

June 3, noon. Robin Garrison is the love interest on Action News. Today she is wearing a fuchsia suit with padded



Garrison:
A daytime
TV star
no matter
what she
wears

shoulders, a white knit shirt with a low neckline, white open-toed shoes, white earrings, a white necklace. She's reporting from the Red Cross in Philadelphia, and her story is a little implausible: people in the Delaware Valley may

Philip Weiss, who was a reporter at the Philadelphia Daily News, is now a free-lance writer living in New York.

be having trouble getting through to relatives in tornado-stricken western Pennsylvania, more than 300 miles away. The story's true purpose seems to be the repetition of the phrase "loved ones." Garrison has a long narrow face with big shadowy blue eyes topped by five or six clouds of honey-colored hair; pronouncing those words makes her slightly hard mouth soften into an O. We hear "loved ones" four times at noon, another three times at 5.

Maybe I am being too romantic about Garrison. But she started it. Last week I caught two of her noon-hour reports on soap-opera stars who grew up in the Delaware Valley. The hardest part was watching her with actress Callan White — who Garrison says plays "an alcoholic desperate for her husband's love" on the ABC show *Loving*, a role White says she feels comfortable in because of her own "basis in struggle." When the two of them sat together on the steps of White's childhood home (ten feet above them a black woman moved about anonymously, responding now and then to their shouted questions), I found it difficult to tell the two slim blondes apart. I am still confused by that, and this added twist of saying "loved ones" seven times makes me think of Garrison as a daytime TV star.

Does she, too, have a basis in struggle? Is she desperate for love?

It's tough focusing on the Red Cross. I turn up the color and hue buttons on the side of the set. The fuchsia suit



all: CJR/Pamela Duffy

Fun with Madonna lookalikes; later the story got ugly.

fuzzes out like an ultraviolet caterpillar. It blotches Garrison's splendid calves and ankles. Her plum-colored lipstick vibrates.

June 3. Who's to blame for the shrinking of the language — the journalists or the politicians? Here's how two pols (who, by the way, spoke in perfect TV "bites") and three reporters on Action News summed up the effects of the tornadoes today:

U.S. Representative Bill Gray: "a very tragic situation"
 Senator Arlen Specter: "absolutely devastating"
 Co-anchor Lisa Thomas-Laury: "devastating"
 Weatherman Harry Martin: "so devastating"
 Co-anchor Marc Howard: "devastated."

June 3, 6 P.M. Despite her blasé demeanor, Chris Wagner's the most flamboyant dresser on Action News. Today she looks like a giant Elizabethan bumblebee: she wears a bright orange shirt with a long collar, a yellow knit vest, and a necklace of black, red, and yellow beads.

Stranger even than the garb, at first, seems her report.

She is in the basement of a house, telling us what to do if a tornado is coming: "If you're in the southwest corner you have a much better chance of the house collapsing away from you if it's hit."

If it's hit? When was the last time a tornado landed in the Delaware Valley? I call the National Weather Service and learn that perhaps two tornadoes a year land in south-



Bringing tragedies home

eastern Pennsylvania, but that they almost always peter out without inflicting much damage. Wagner's report makes about as much sense as following up the police bombing of MOVE with a piece on "What You Should Do If the Police Drop a Bomb on Your House."

Later it hits me. Not the meteorology, the philosophy: Action News doesn't really care about a story unless it involves the viewer personally. Thus the contortions to dump faraway calamities in the lap of the Delaware Valley: Robin Garrison insisting we have "loved ones" in tornadoland, Wagner asserting that we and those victims may share a common fate.

June 3, 6:20 P.M. Channel 6 "sports director" Don Tollefson, who is wearing another of his Italian-look suits and in whose widow-peaked blond hair can still be spotted the tracks of his comb, has amazing presence. He's not brainy, and doesn't pretend to be. I began to like him a few days ago. That was when Tollefson, after hearing Phillies manager John Felske's detailed explanation of how he'd shuffle players to get Mike Schmidt from third to first, glanced at the camera in bewilderment and confessed, "Complicated."

Tonight, when Tollefson says that the Phillies must "youthen up" their starting rotation, I nearly swoon. Who



Critters: Always newsworthy

else could say "youthen up"? Tollefson's a natural. He doesn't care about words, but about connecting; given a chance he'd probably shove the camera out of the way and grab his pal on the other side of the screen by the lapels.

Like Ishmael, accosting the reader at the beginning of *Moby Dick*. Call me Tolly, he seems to be saying — and that's what everyone on Action News does call him. One measure of his authenticity is the staggering number of clichés he uses, without a grain of selfconsciousness. Here's a sampler: "much-needed R & R," "it is that age-old factor called momentum," "the tide changed," "let's set the stage," "don't get mad, get even," "up and down, Jekyll and Hyde

both: CJP/Pamela Duffy



Tolly:
Hits clichés
to all fields.

season," "emotionally draining rollercoaster," "here's the fly in the ointment," "the stage is set," "when you're hot you're hot."

But if Tolly wants to pitch those clichés in the majors, he'll have to work on some of his flaws:

1. An acute case of Channel 6 booster disease. He keeps breaking into baloney. Temple basketball coach John Chaney, for instance, "is just a great natural resource for our town," Tollefson says. "He really gives a darn for the young people."

2. An unwatered Philadelphia accent. I could be wrong on this one: many great names in sports have been furthered by their regional identification (Zeke from Cabin Creek, the Hick from French Lick) and possibly Tolly will benefit from his "Fluffya" accent. On that chance, here's a glossary that will help his fans understand him.

English	Tollefson
Orioles	Or-ols
children	chil-ren, or chil-rens
leg	layg
downtown	day-own-tay-own
Pete Rose	Pete Rahose

6:25 P.M. Hot news today: Mayor W. Wilson Goode is promoting U.S. savings bonds.

Covering the "mare" (his title is often pronounced with Philadelphian elision) presents an interesting problem. You'd think it'd be easy; Goode's an Action News kind of guy, a booster who participates in endless media events. Channel 6 needs him. The paradox is that he usually speaks too slowly and without sufficient emphasis to rate a sound bite. Ergo, if your only view of the mayor is Action News you might think that zombies from outer space had stolen Goode's essence and left only his husk to preside over the city. This is because Channel 6 rarely lets him talk. I've seen His Honor doing many upbeat things: snipping a ribbon, sipping a 7-Up, yukking it up with business leaders at a museum opening, etc., but have hardly ever heard him. Usually the anchor supplies the words, boiling the originals

down to the correct platitudinous consistency. (Jim Gardner sums up a Memorial Day address: "Mayor Goode said our society might not be perfect, but he reminded that it's a whole lot better than anything else.")

11:25 P.M. When the soap-opera version of Action News is released to a hungry public, Robin Garrison will meet handsome Lorne Matalon in the company cafeteria for coffee, and they'll drink each other in with eyes the size of billiard balls.

Lorne Matalon is chief fluff reporter for Action News. Tonight the dashing newshound is covering a 100th birthday party thrown by Honeywell for its employees and being swept away by the raw emotion of the gathering.

"The show was all the company had hoped for — music, memories, and a look ahead," Matalon reports.

This goes on for some time; Matalon is a walking *tabula rasa*, on which promoters seem to be able to write any silly words they please. Which fits in just fine with Action News's boosterism agenda. The station boosts not only your usual run of charities but businesses as well. I've seen shill jobs for a suburban disco called Pulsations, an Allentown swimming pool with a wave-making device, a Center City pillow store, and Bassetts ice cream (during a report touting ice cream's nutritive value).

June 4, noon. Does the First Amendment protect such *outré* expressions as Chris Wagner's outfit? Today she has on a white dress with big black polka dots, black and white beads, and big white leaf-shaped earrings. Wait till Rehnquist hears about this.

5:20 P.M. Action News likes to portray the weather as a moody old relative. Tonight, for instance, weatherman Harry Martin says that weather conditions "have not made up their mind yet" about next weekend. This is only Tuesday.

The homey view of the weather must be calculated. Action News has an old-fashioned weather map with sticky-



Martin: When
the clouds
weren't
smiling, he
was.

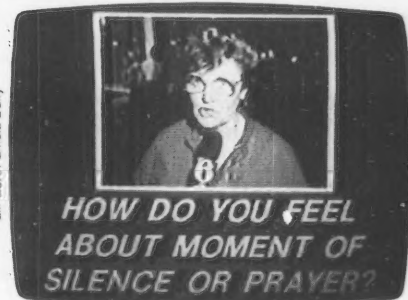
backed clouds with frowns and suns with big smiles — a stunning departure from many stations' high-tech weather (no sweeping radar arms here). Tornadoes on Channel 6 are called "heavy hitters," thunderstorms "T-storms" or "boomers." And each night's weather gets a theme name on a cloud, like "Great Start."

Martin, a thin, triangular-faced man with an ironic slant to his features, has a tic that I find maddening. Three times

during my stay with Action News I hear him say that it's so hot in the South that they had to hose down the livestock. Once we get footage of an arc of hosewater playing over the Himalayan flanks and teats of a heat-walloped sow, and when the camera returns to Harry his features have an added crinkle.

June 4, 11:08 P.M. Action News does a fine job covering the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on moments of silent prayer and its likely effects on some New Jersey school districts. Even so, part of the report reveals what seems to me an essential spinelessness about the news operation. This is the "man-in-the-street" interlude at a suburban mall. Four people are interviewed. Three of them offer ignorant statements that serve to confuse the issue at hand. (Ignoramus #3: "We had it when I went to school and it didn't hurt us.")

Of course, such stuff is revealing about public opinion, but Channel 6 is too quick to resort to this kind of reporting.



Action News's court of public opinion comes to order.

You feel a certain abdication of control of the camera, for the sake of being able to say, in effect, "This is your station." React stories, they're called, and that's what Action News gets: Reaction.

11:30 P.M. Lorne Matalon has got a meatier assignment tonight. He's at the circus.

In a few seconds, the words "greatest," "glitter," "glamour," "happy," "famous," "crazy," "capers," "legend," "mythical," "symbolic," "ancient," "fabled," and "tops" spill from his mouth like rhinestones from a costumer's scoop. Probably he can't wait to get off camera and have another cotton candy. He says: "They say the circus is just for children. Well, forget that. The smiles we saw tonight. . . ." As Matalon breathlessly delivers this last bit, the Toulouse-Lautrec hues of his face slant into the corner of a picture frame dominated by boas and sequins.

The circus horses and camels we see here are the latest in a Channel 6 procession of animals that would shame Noah. I've seen giraffes, elephants (one ridden by reporter Elliott Rodriguez), a gorilla and her newborn, unidentified large birds, a rhinoceros. There have been three feature stories on dogs: surreal footage of a terrier that rides a skateboard in Sydney, Australia, an inside look at a Soviet dog show, a testimonial to French poodles.

The poodles story was done by a primate named Don Polec, Action News's designated flake. Polec is talented, but watching him is painful. This is because of his comic

device of making sarcastic comments about the stories he's doing while he does them. They're puff pieces anyway, so all the what-am-I-doing-here eyeball rollings and jaded comments come off as shabby efforts to have it both ways. Also,



Furry critters: also newsworthy

Polec wouldn't know news if it bit him in the leg. His story about a spate of births at the zoo fails to say just which animals have given birth to how many offspring. The whole point seems to be that moment at the end when Polec mentions all the cigars being passed around and an Action News confederate in a gorilla suit hands him a banana.

June 5, 5 P.M. Rapture: for the second time in three days, Robin Garrison is in her fuchsia suit.

She has today's big story, a good story about an elderly couple found dead in their suburban home. The husband died first; his bedridden wife apparently died of starvation five days later. There's a hard-news angle here, but it is the genius of Action News to treat it as a neighborhood story, and in fact Garrison does not get to the key facts for what seems like ten or fifteen seconds. The thrust of her report is, Why didn't the neighbors figure out what was going on before the invalidated seventy-three-year-old widow died? Two neighbors respond frankly, saying the couple had earlier spurned their offers of help.

When Garrison says that the neighbors "feel terrible about what happened but they just don't see what else they



Rodriguez and elephant were an item.

could have done," it seems that some small expiation is taking place. Like so much of Action News, the report is a masque, a polished presentation serving to reconcile a community to its tumultuous realities.

"They wanted their privacy, and that's more or less what they got," one neighbor says, and this final statement, treating the deaths as a parable about nonneighborliness, seems perfectly attuned to the Action News ethos.

Unfortunately, the highly textured report is flattened by

the bleatings from the talent behind the ochre anchor desk. Within about an hour we get the following characterizations of the couple's deaths:

"But the big story . . . a tragic story . . ." (Lisa Thomas-Laury);

"The tragedy unfolded . . ." (Robin Garrison);

"The Sharon Hill deaths are just one tragic example . . ." (Marc Howard);

"It is a tragic story . . ." (Howard again);

"But the big story in Action News tonight is the tragic case . . ." (Jim Gardner).

Five tragedies in sixty minutes; surely an indoor record. The only hope is some sort of behavior mod: alligator clips, say, attached to the toes, delivering jolts at the merest mention of tragedy. That would, at least, restore a portion of the word's real meaning.

11:02 P.M. The big story (also "tragic," naturally) turns out to be vague, weird. It involves a report of a rape in a Mount Laurel, New Jersey, motel committed by an unknown man who found his victim's name among newspaper pictures of Madonna look-alikes and called her, posing as a talent agent. Marc Howard has a grave tone and is seen sitting in the newroom. It's the most untheatrical pose I've witnessed on Channel 6. His story has almost no facts. Missing are the victim's age, her home town, the hospital at which she was treated, the police report. Of course much of this vagueness is intended to protect the victim, but the real point seems to be the moralizing about the "craze" over Madonna, who gave a concert in town a week before. Madonna's on the shitlist. "Her gaudy, sexy style," Howard says, in his Nixonian, headwagging style.

I'm confused. Just a week ago, Jim Gardner was winking over the "steamy" rocker and Howard himself was shouting to make himself heard over "twenty-five thousand watts driving fifty-four speakers" at a suburban disco's Madonna lip-synch contest. Channel 6 was a big part of the very "media hype" Howard now lambastes.

Maybe that's why he's sitting in the newsroom: he's in the newsroom because newsrooms are to blame. So the staging isn't untheatrical after all. Which doesn't mean this is an occasion for self-awareness, for confessions of Channel 6's involvement. No: Action News identifies so totally with what it perceives as the viewers' attitudes that it has no difficulty pointing a finger at "the media" as another of the vaguely threatening forces on the people's horizon, and damn the contradictions.

11:12 P.M. Watch out. A day after his trip to the Big Top, Lorne Matalon's doing a neighborhood story. He's on a Fishtown street, telling us that "a number" of rats have been seen in a hole flanked by orange-and-white Streets Department warning signs. A neighborhood man named Walter Pomroy has videotaped the rats. We see the tape: a couple of rats are nibbling food in the hole. The food looks like processed cheese or meat; plainly someone has tossed it in to get the rats to center stage. Matalon reports that Pomroy says he's called "various city departments" to get rid of the rats, but no one will accept responsibility. Not

that Matalon has made any effort to call these various departments himself.

Matalon says, "He [Pomroy] says you wouldn't want to live on his corner right now."

This last statement, issued in a tone that other reporters reserve for the assassinations of kings, is absurd: it would be hard to imagine a more popular spot. Kids crowd the scene; in one shot there are at least seventeen, in another nine. A Hogarthian youth in a red cap worries with his teeth at a cuticle as Pomroy fills in the credulous Matalon. Pom-



CJR/Pamela Duffy

Furry critter! Neighborhood in terror! This story had everything.

roy, a high-foreheaded guy in an old Army jacket, says he first saw the rats during a Flyers game he and some friends were watching, evidently out on the stoop.

The kids, the Flyers game, the Pied Piper with the camera, the pieces of cheese thrown in the hole — this is not a story about municipal neglect, it's about a neighborhood. Neighborhood life, a neighborhood calling attention to its eccentricities. The only one who does not understand this is our circus boy. During the seventy-second report he struggles to transform the story into a scandal, warning us — we glimpse the glamorous suit and tie bar, the glossy piles of dark hair, the beautifully straight nose — warning us that Pomroy will be sending his tape to City Hall.

Maybe this is the soul of Action News. You might think it's news, the reporter might think it's news, maybe even the producer, too. But who's holding the camera? The neighbors.

11:30 P.M. The news is topped off with bromides. One of them involves a thirty-four-year-old man honored by the local United Cerebral Palsy Association "for the positive impact he has had on other disabled people like himself." There's his name, nothing else.

What did he do for others?

How is he disabled?

Questions, questions. Enough with the questions. An old friend has told me that she watches Action News every night because it's like a warm glass of milk before she goes to bed. Isn't that the point?

So relax. Watch Jim Gardner: a pleasant, honest man who dresses in gray suits. He has gray hair, dark worry lines, beetling, sympathetic eyebrows, and warm, pale eyes. It's late now, and the pleasant gray man sprinkles these last few items like sand on our eyelids.

Sprinkle, sprinkle.

Yawn.

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How to keep 'em happy in Flint

A look at *Journalism* in the town where GM grew up

by MICHAEL MOORE

It was 1983 and General Motors was in no mood for a party. For the past four years the world's largest manufacturing firm had experienced one of the worst recessions in its history, reducing its workforce by more than 150,000 and watching its profits plummet from \$3.5 billion in 1978 to \$963 million in 1982.

Flint, Michigan, the city that gave birth to General Motors in 1908, was particularly hard hit. On January 10, 1983, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that Flint had the highest unemployment rate — 26 percent — in the nation. Nine days later, General Motors announced it would close its Flint Fisher Body factory, throwing another 3,600 people out of work. The news was a devastating blow to the city, which had seen nearly 20,000 of its 78,000 GM workers lose their jobs since 1978.

As luck would have it, however, 1983 was GM's seventy-fifth anniversary and Alfred L. Peloquin, editor of the city's Newhouse daily, *The Flint Journal*, wanted to throw a party honoring the auto company. GM was not sure that the time was right for a lavish bash, but Peloquin was persistent and so, on September 10, 1983, a five-mile-long parade saluting GM wound its way past the boarded-up storefronts of downtown Flint. At the front of the parade, riding along with the GM executives, was Alfred Peloquin.

Leading the parade for General Motors and Flint's business community was nothing new for *The Flint Journal*, a monopoly paper with a circulation of 110,000, but Peloquin and his publisher, Robert D. Swartz, have approached the job with unusual zeal. Together, they sit on the boards of seventeen community

and business booster organizations, including the Flint Chamber of Commerce, which Swartz chaired from 1983 to 1985; the Alliance for a Greater Flint, which Peloquin founded; and the Flint Convention and Visitors Bureau, of which Peloquin is marketing chairman.

In a 1982 memo to the staff, the *Journal's* metro editor, Allan Wilhelm, summed up the paper's aims. It was management's intention to make the *Journal* "a true community newspaper," he wrote, pointing out that those newspapers that have "gone beyond that limit" with too much hard news and investigative reporting have done so "to their detriment."

The *Journal* hasn't had to worry about going beyond that limit. In fact, "the *Journal* is in bed with the very institutions it should be covering," says Al MacLeese, an award-winning *Journal* feature writer. "The paper has begun to resemble a community newsletter."

Other *Journal* reporters charge that the paper has covered up stories that are potentially damaging to Peloquin's and Swartz's associates. For example:

□ Between June 1982 and May 1983, five people who were identified as having legionnaire's disease died at Flint's McLaren General Hospital. Swartz, a board member at McLaren since 1979, claims to have "never heard" of this problem and refuses to comment further. The deaths were investigated and confirmed by the Michigan Department of Public Health and were common knowledge among staff and administration at the hospital. No news of these deaths appeared in the *Journal*.

□ In April of this year *Journal* reporter Sheila Beachum wrote an investigative piece on the use of tax dollars and foundation-grant funds by the Flint Board of Education for trips to Las Vegas, Reno, Houston, San Diego, and Coventry, England. The story was killed after a visit

to the *Journal* by Flint school superintendent and Chamber of Commerce vice-chairman Joseph Pollack, who subsequently explained that "it's the *Journal's* policy not to print anything that could affect an upcoming school election." Peloquin says that this is not the case, adding that one of the paper's purposes is "to inform our public on any important issue affecting an election." Nevertheless, the story has yet to appear in print.

□ Peloquin, through his contacts in the community, has acquired information about news events which he has refused to pass along to his reporters. He admits, for example, that he knew the details of Flint's offer to lure GM's Saturn plant to the city, but did not tell his urban development reporter, Corby L. Casler, who was writing the story. He also knew long in advance — and subsequently admitted as much to staff members — of an attempt to move the Bobby Crim Road Race, considered one of the top twenty-five races in the country, out of Flint, but did not tell the sports department about it. Peloquin says that he often obtains "privileged" information from the boards he sits on, and that it would be wrong to divulge that information.

"Peloquin and Swartz have become so involved on a personal basis with Flint's powers-that-be," says a staff member who requested anonymity, "that they've lost sight of the newspaper's primary responsibility to inform the people."

Using sight of that responsibility began long before Peloquin and Swartz came to the *Journal*. In 1911, three years after the formation of General Motors, the city elected the local socialist leader, John Menton, as mayor. Many city residents had become concerned about the power the new company was beginning to wield. GM's

Michael Moore is the editor of Michigan Voice, a statewide alternative monthly published in Flint, and a commentator on National Public Radio's All Things Considered.

founders, alarmed by this growing populist movement, ran a company vice-president, Charles Stewart Mott, in the following year's election.

At the same time, *The Flint Journal*, which had treated the socialist mayor in a fair manner, was sold to the Booth newspaper chain. The paper took an abrupt right turn, running stories with headlines like *MENACE IN STATE SOCIALISM* and *SOCIALISM DENIES GOD*. The articles about millionaire candidate Mott tended to be more benign (*BELIEVE HE WILL BE WORKINGMAN'S FRIEND*). Mott, who eventually became GM's largest single stockholder, won the election and served several terms as Flint's mayor.

In 1928, Michael A. Gorman was named editor of the *Journal*, a position he held until his death in 1958. He was affectionately called "Flint's Super Booster" and "Flint's Spark Plug" by Mott and other GM brass. Gorman, who for six years shared a house with a GM vice-president, claimed considerable credit for GM's expansion in Flint, which resulted in the city having the biggest concentration of autoworkers in the world.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s a succession of editors perpetuated the booster tradition. But in 1978, shortly after the sale of the Booth papers to Newhouse, the president of Booth — which operates semi-autonomously under Newhouse ownership — asked his Washington bureau chief, Ray Stephens, to take charge as editor of the *Journal* and attempt to halt a circulation decline.

Stephens was a maverick reporter who had begun his thirty-two years in the newspaper business by organizing a strike at the *Arkansas Gazette*. Upon his arrival in Flint, he put an end to the "grip-and-grin" photographs of handshaking country-club presidents, the puff pieces on GM's upper-level management, the blanket support of the United Way. At the same time, he began recruiting a staff of young reporters who were instructed that there were to be "no sacred cows" and that the *Journal* was going to be "a reporter's newspaper."

The first investigative piece Stephens ran exposed how General Motors was shipping out cars that had cast-iron shavings in the engines. David Vizard, a *Journal* reporter, had sneaked into the factory, inspected the engines, and taken

samples of the shavings. When GM's p.r. people discovered that the story was going to run, they called Vizard and, according to him, said he had "a bright future and it would be a shame to lose it over something like this." They called Stephens, too. "You would have thought I had insulted God," Stephens recalls. "So I thought this would be a good time to let 'God' know that the torch had been passed, that GM wasn't dealing with the previous editors."

Several months later Stephens ran another investigative piece, again by Vizard, about a secret button that enabled Chevrolet management to speed up an assembly line, a violation of GM's contract with the United Auto Workers. When GM's p.r. people got word of the story, Stephens says, they tried to talk him out of running it. The story ran and GM was forced to pay more than \$1 million in compensation to the workers on that line.

"*The Flint Journal* had always been a mouthpiece for the old monied interests in town," Stephens says. "The

UAW — the working class who make up the majority of Flint — were being ignored. It was time that they had access to the *Journal*."

That access proved to be short-lived. Four months after Stephens took over, Robert Swartz, a Flint native who had worked his way up the Booth ladder, was named publisher of the *Journal*. Stephens recalls that Swartz began receiving complaints from local businessmen about "all that negative news" in the *Journal*. "He would come back from his Rotary Club meetings," Stephens says, "and tell me that people were upset with me. 'Why can't you control your editor?' they would ask him. It bugged him a lot. He soon found out I'm not a good company man."

The pressure from Flint's business leaders to remove Stephens was growing. The breaking point came in the summer of 1981 when Stephens, over Swartz's objections, ran a story about two local men who had formed an auto brokerage to sell cars — from Detroit dealers — at a lower price than Flint



Bucker and booster: Ray Stephens (inset) bucked the *Journal's* booster tradition and was fired. Alfred E. Pelouquin, shown below in a parade saluting GM's 75th birthday, proudly upholds it.

above: David Stamp/Jackson Hole Guide



dealers were offering. The area's forty-one car dealers, infuriated by the publicity given to this new business, banded together and pulled all of their ads out of the *Journal*. Over the next six weeks the *Journal* reportedly lost more than \$300,000 in advertising revenue due to the boycott.

On October 15, Stephens stepped into Swartz's office for a 7:00 A.M. meeting that had been scheduled some days before. Swartz greeted his editor with an ultimatum: accept a contract for one year as a consultant and then take early retirement, or be fired. Just six months shy of the ten years of service required at Booth to qualify for a full pension, Stephens chose to give up the editorship and accept the consultancy on the condition that he would receive his pension. Swartz agreed and by 7:15 Ray Stephens was gone. (Swartz says that the basic problem was that the two "did not work together well as a team." Stephens is now editor of the *Guide* in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.)

The man chosen to replace him was Alfred Peloquin, a thirty-five-year veteran with Booth Newspapers. Once again the paper filled up with tributes to local business leaders and photospreads of society events, at times prominently featuring the publisher of the *Journal* with the governor or with the president of the Flint-based Mott Foundation. (Founded by Charles Stewart Mott, the foundation is the eleventh largest in the country, with assets of \$580 million.)

Peloquin set the tone for the *Journal*'s new "positive" direction in 1982 when, in a memo, he listed his top three editorial goals for the first quarter: "Readership coupon projects," "Neighbor profiles," and "Back-page photo display for day-after coverage of major fund-raising social events." In another set of goals for the second quarter, far down on the list was "plan and carry out at least one new investigative project."

According to Lee Bergquist, a former *Journal* city hall reporter who is now at *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, "Peloquin saw his role as boosting the morale of the community by printing positive, upbeat stories, and pushing aside the bad news."

The most glaring example of this came on January 19, 1983, with the announcement of the Fisher Body closing.

The announcement was covered by *CBS Evening News* and front-page headlines across the state told the sad story (*The Detroit News*: FLINT TO LOSE 3,600 JOBS). *The Flint Journal*, though, chose to highlight GM's other announcement that day: BUICK GETS \$200 MILLION TO BUILD NEW CAR read the headline on page one. The lead, which downplayed the sobering fact that Flint was losing 8 percent of its GM workforce, made it sound as if there were cause for celebration:

The years of speculation are over. Buick will redesign its assembly lines in Flint at a cost of more than \$200 million to begin production of front-wheel-drive cars in a move General Motors officials said will preserve nearly 5000 local jobs.

After a brief sentence about the Fisher closing, nothing was mentioned about the job loss until the eleventh paragraph, on the jump page.

Crime is another area in which bad news tends to be glossed over. On September 9, 1984, the FBI released its annual Uniform Crime Report, which ranked Flint second only to Miami in per capita number of violent crimes. The front-page headline in the *Detroit Free Press* read: FLINT RANKS 2ND, DETROIT 3RD IN VIOLENT CRIME. *The Flint Journal* ran a wire story on page three that made no mention of Flint. The following day it ran another wire story that did acknowledge that the city ranked second in terms of crime, but two weeks later the paper dismissed the bad news with an article headed NEW LOOK AT NATIONAL CRIME FIGURES PUTS FLINT IN BETTER LIGHT.

While the "bad news" tends to get buried, what passes as good news is accorded prominent play. Thus, the *Journal* gave front-page treatment to a story about new shrubs being planted in front of the Buick plant, while page C-14 was deemed the proper place for an article about the state Civil Rights Department charging the Flint Area Chamber of Commerce with sex discrimination.

"When Swartz became chairman of the chamber of commerce," recalls one reporter, "the chamber all of a sudden became an important area of news. As a reporter you would go to their meetings, take notes on what your boss said, and then go back and try to write an

impartial story. It was an uncomfortable situation to be in."

Larry Kasperek, a former photo editor at the *Journal* who is now at the Orange County, California, *Register*, adds that "any time there was a groundbreaking [for a new development] it was the latest 'salvation of Flint' and we had to be there to cover it."

Perhaps "cover" is not the right word. Every time a new downtown project opens or one of Flint's major businesses has an anniversary, the *Journal* celebrates the event by running a special supplement full of puff pieces written by *Journal* staff writers. Their largest effort was for General Motors's seventy-fifth anniversary, a 128-page supplement that probably grossed the *Journal* about \$150,000 in advertising revenues — and demoralized the staff.

"Just imagine," says Daniel Gearino, a former *Journal* reporter who is now city editor of the Casper, Wyoming, *Star-Tribune*, "if all the manpower that went into producing that salute had been spent on hard news. We could have covered a lot of stories."

Peloquin, according to another source, "was on a personal high" from the supplement, the parade, and the black-tie GM anniversary dinner, which he had chaired. He decided to throw an appreciation party for his staff at the city's exclusive University Club, high atop Flint's tallest building. An expensive spread of food and drinks awaited some forty reporters. None showed up, so metro editor Wilhelm went back to the *Journal* office, where he managed to round up three reporters. The others were having a party of their own.

Peloquin, who says he was 'hurt' by the organized snub, claims that "morale is good and getting better." Others see it differently. "The perception of people in the newsroom," says *Journal* writer MacLecse, "is that Peloquin is not with them and may be against them."

Peloquin aggravated matters last year when, after reprimanding a staff member for accepting free use of a car from GM, he was seen driving one of GM's yet-to-be-released 1985 Buicks into the *Journal* lot. Peloquin explained that he was "only doing [GM] a favor" because the company was "short of drivers and needed someone to bring the car from Pontiac to Flint." The apparent double

standard angered some staff members. "Since when," commented one reporter, "is the editor of the *Journal* also a driver for GM?"

If community boosterism is the editorial philosophy of the *Journal*, then its coverage of AutoWorld set the standard by which all other downtown reporting would be judged. Billed as the "world's largest indoor entertainment center" (a questionable claim repeated often in the *Journal* as fact), AutoWorld was conceived by the Mott Foundation as a salute to the automobile and "its importance in American society." It was also an attempt to turn Flint into a tourist mecca and provide jobs as an answer to the area's unemployment. The foundation, however, wasn't sure if the projected 900,000 people a year would travel to Flint to see its \$73 million theme park. A source with close ties to the Mott Foundation says it was an open letter in the *Journal*, signed by Peloquin and Swartz, imploring the foundation to build AutoWorld that finally tipped the scales in AutoWorld's favor.

That the *Journal* published thousands of inches — including the obligatory ninety-six-page supplement — about every aspect of the construction (front page: STEEL COLUMNS BEING ERECTED AT AUTOWORLD), opening ceremonies (1200 SALUTE THE 'MIRACLE' OF AUTOWORLD), and promotion (NEW BROCHURE WILL HELP RAISE \$6 MILLION) was hardly a surprise. "The joke among the photographers," recalls Kasperek, "was that anytime we were told to go shoot something at AutoWorld, we'd say, 'Well, they must be putting in the first roll of toilet paper.'" Swartz became publicity chairman of the AutoWorld Foundation's fund-raising campaign. He was also a personal solicitor for the AutoWorld Foundation and donated "at least twenty-five thousand dollars in *Journal* funds to the project," according to the foundation's president, G. Bridget Ryan.

The evening before AutoWorld opened, the ultimate insult was paid to the *Journal* at a \$100-a-plate dinner to kick off the festivities. William S. White, president of the Mott Foundation, was honored as Flint's "Citizen of the Year." As Swartz handed him his award, White reciprocated by anointing *Journal* staff writer and self-described

Flint booster David V. Graham as "the official AutoWorld reporter."

AutoWorld, unfortunately, was not the amusement park the *Journal* had led its readers to expect. The park had only four rides, two of which traveled through tunnels at speeds of less than three miles an hour. Many of the exhibits repeatedly broke down in what *Newsweek* sarcastically described as a "spontaneous homage to the auto industry." Within six months AutoWorld, the latest "salvation of Flint," had closed its doors for an indefinite period. (It opened again this past May, but will close down again in September.)

The *Journal* maintained its "positive" attitude right to the end. The day the closing was announced, as many of the state's major newspapers bannered the news on their front pages, the *Journal* ran the story on the bottom two inches of page one, with the headline AUTOWORLD SHUTS DOORS FOR WINTER. On closing day — Sunday, January 13, 1985 — 13 million readers of that day's *Family Weekly* magazine supplement were treated to an article by the *Journal*'s metro editor, Allan Wilhelm. Its title? "Flint, Michigan: The City That Wouldn't Die." Prominently displayed was a photo of AutoWorld with the caption "The Symbol of Flint's Revival: AutoWorld."

"Here's a guy," says David Waymire, a reporter in the Booth papers' Lansing bureau who found the whole episode embarrassing, "the metro editor of the *Journal*, who's supposed to know what's going on, who's supposed to have his ear to the ground."

Wilhelm, who is a member of the Mayor's Committee to Improve Flint's Image, points out that the appearance of the piece on the very day AutoWorld closed down "was a coincidence I had no control over," adding that the article had been written several months prior to publication. "Obviously," he says, "I was less than overjoyed."

There appears to be little chance of the *Journal* changing its focus in the near future. Earlier this year, in his Sunday "Letter from the Editor," Peloquin clearly stated the *Journal*'s objectives by concurring with a statement by David Starr, senior editor for Newhouse Newspapers. "Urban development," Starr

had said in a speech, "is a fragile flower that needs tender loving care and lots and lots of time and patience to flourish. . . . If [newspapers] decide that a revitalization program is no good or won't work, then they will fulfill the prophecy by nay-saying, nitpicking, etc. But if a paper can be persuaded to help, then the prospect of success is enormously brighter. . . . [An editor] becoming a participant is no problem."

Many current and former *Journal* reporters see it differently. "If you build false hopes among your readers," says former *Journal* reporter Lee Bergquist, "by telling them that things are getting better when it's clear they're getting worse, then you perform a great disservice and nothing gets accomplished."

Former *Journal* reporter Gearino agrees. "The best way a paper can serve the community — to be a true booster — is to tell the truth, whether its good or bad, so the people will be able to deal with the issues before them."

The issues of Flint's unemployment (now around 17 percent) and plant closings (which are expected to eliminate another 10,000 jobs by 1990) still receive scant coverage. Hard-hitting stories proposed by reporters (an investigation into the Mott Foundation's financial health, a profile of the Maryland man who controls Flint's three major downtown projects) are routinely turned down by the editors. "Instead of helping the community by asking the question: 'How can we save our city?' complains one reporter, "the *Journal* turns its pages into a travel brochure which reads: Visit Scenic Flint!"

In his "Letter from the Editor," Peloquin insisted that "a supportive media . . . has to be added to public and private cooperation for [urban development] success," and noted that in Flint "General Motors, the Mott Foundation, and other private investors work together to make good things happen. The *Journal*, its publisher, and this editor support these measures."

But it is pronouncements like these that have convinced Al MacLeese, who is fifty-four and has worked for the *Journal* for seventeen years, to leave the paper early next year. "If this is what it means to be a journalist in Flint, Michigan," says MacLeese, "then I don't want to be part of it." ■

Sweating it out in the suburbs

These days there can be a long detour on the way to the metro desk

by ROB LEVIN

The Soviet Union had just announced that it would not participate in the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. At the *Los Angeles Times*, editors searched for the reporters who could best handle the story. With some of the country's most skilled journalists at their fingertips and others stationed around the globe, including Moscow, the editors nevertheless turned to Mathis Chazanov, a thirty-five-year-

old staff writer assigned to the *Times*'s westside suburban bureau.

At many metropolitan papers, the days of staffing suburban bureaus with fresh-scrubbed cubs right out of journalism school has gone the way of linotype machines and paste pots. "Papers used to be grateful for any warm body they could grab off the sidewalk," says media critic Ben Bagdikian, dean of the graduate school of journalism at the University of California at Berkeley. "It used to be very hard to hire any really vigorous reporters for the suburban bureaus . . . and now quite good people are willing to settle for that."

Matt Chazanov is a classic example. He came to the *Times* from UPI, where he was Moscow bureau chief, equipped with a fluency in Russian and an ample list of diplomatic sources. Previously, he had been based in Israel.

Many newspapers can trace their

newly fortified suburban staffs to the heady days of Watergate. After Woodward and Bernstein became household names, enrollments swelled at journalism schools, and with the folding of several metropolitan dailies the supply of reporters quickly exceeded the demand. The few jobs available were in the burgeoning suburbs, where newspapers were hustling to build circulation — and advertising revenues — through zoned editions and tabloid inserts. Once-weak suburban bureaus soon became staffed with talented reporters.

As a result, one of journalism's traditional career paths — from star billing at a small-town daily to the metro desk at a big-city daily — is becoming more the exception than the rule. These days, experienced reporters looking for a slot on the staff of a major metropolitan newspaper often find that they must start out covering the suburbs. Indeed, many seasoned reporters at smaller papers are searching their souls before committing themselves to a future in suburbia.

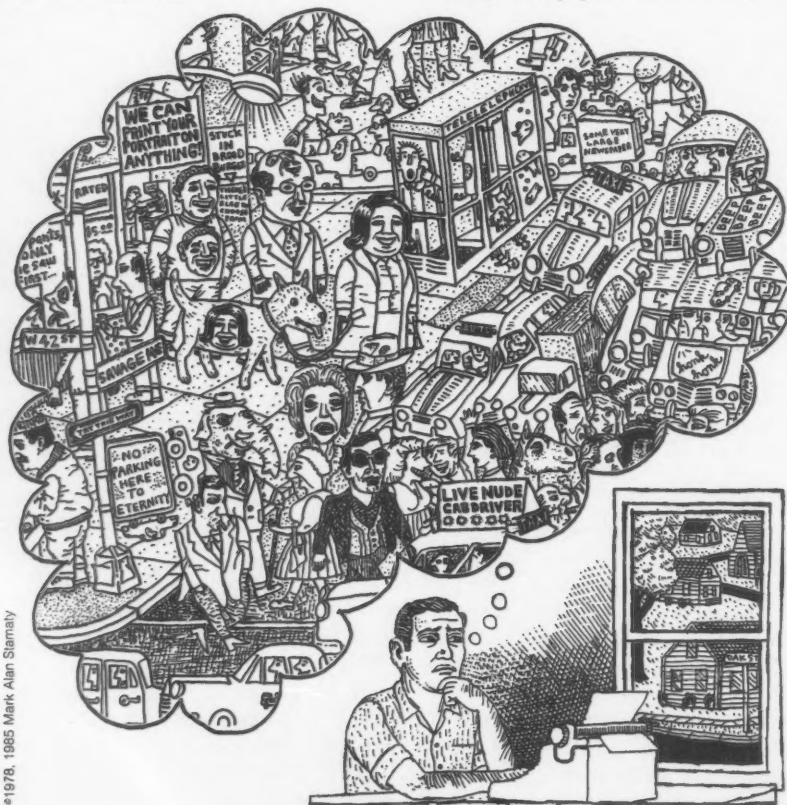
Two years ago, while a suburban reporter for *The Providence Journal*, G. Wayne Miller applied for a job at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. But when Miller learned that he would have to spend several years on the *Inquirer*'s suburban Neighbors staff before being considered for the metro desk, he bowed out. "I felt I had already paid my dues," says Miller, who came to the *Journal* from the *Cape Cod Times* and now covers prisons and social services for the paper.

In 1982, John Aloysius Farrell left the *Baltimore News-American* for the city desk of *The Denver Post*, figuring he would make a name for himself there and proceed directly to the national staff of a larger daily. It didn't work. Now, he says, "I'm three years older, and I'm still facing the same options."

Farrell, now a staff writer for the *Post*'s Sunday magazine, is not sure what career benefits he has gained from his years in Denver. "Whether that is going to advance my career, I don't know."


For Lucy Morgan and Jack Reed of

Rob Levin is a reporter for *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*.



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the *St. Petersburg Times* in Florida, suburban reporting has paid off handsomely. Last year they dug into irregularities in the Pasco County sheriff's department and wound up with the 1984 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting. Although Morgan and Reed, who both formerly worked in the *Times* city room, could move back there if they chose, both have elected to stay in the suburbs, where Morgan is an investigative reporter who works for the city desk, and Reed is a suburban editor.

But most reporters who have had metropolitan-desk experience find covering the suburbs a mixed blessing. "It comes down to making the best of what you've got," says Stephen S. Braun, who was a Pulitzer Prize finalist while he was at the *Detroit Free Press* and who now works with Matt Chazanov in the west-side bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*. "I may not be able to go out and spend two months doing some heavyweight investigative reporting or some incredibly long takeout. But you just change the nature of your reporting. Instead of taking satisfaction from some huge piece, you kind of burrow into your own beat a little bit."

Mark Butler, a thirty-two-year-old veteran of Philadelphia-area newspapers, went to work at the *Inquirer's* Main Line Neighbors section in August 1983. "A lot of people who have been on cityside and who have worked for the regional desk at the *Inquirer* . . . avoid Neighbors like the plague," he says. "They see it as a demotion. But you have to look at the big picture. And the big picture is that the suburbs are where things are happening right now. It's really not as bad as some people think."

But there can be a lot of busywork. At the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, says Nancy A. Miller, the paper's suburban editor, suburban reporters have to rush from meeting to meeting, and "if it's anything of significance the city desk gets it." Miller adds, "I don't think [the suburban reporters] feel overlooked. I think they feel overloaded."

Still, Matt Chazanov says that his stint at the *Los Angeles Times's* westside bureau has allowed him to develop a different style of reporting. He says he has been able to "write longer and deeper stories, to spend more time with a story than you can with a wire service."

How long can reporters like Braun, Butler, and Chazanov expect to stay on the suburban beat? All editors insist that there are no hard-and-fast rules. According to suburban editor Robert Rawitch, the average hitch at the *Los Angeles Times* is two to three years, although he warns that it may grow longer as the *Times* expands its suburban coverage. In the past two and a half years, Rawitch says, about twenty suburban and regional reporters have moved into the city room.

At *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, a reporter in his twenties is told that he might have to spend five to ten years on the suburban beat. "We try to err on the side of caution on a new reporter," says editor Eugene Roberts, "just so we in no way mislead him." But in the past three years, Roberts points out, many suburban reporters have gone on to more glamorous local, national, and foreign beats.

At *The Miami Herald* a transfer into the city room is a "kind of lingering joke," says Larry Meyer, editor of three of that paper's Neighbors editions. "There are still people who remember getting that promise. For a while, it worked."

In order to boost lagging morale on its suburban staff, the *Herald* now regularly assigns Neighbors reporters to short stints on the city desk or the weekly features section, *Living Today*. Meyer calls it an effort "to make everybody at the paper feel like they are part of the *Herald*, not just the B team."

Nevertheless, there is still a great eagerness to escape from Neighbors, where a steady fare of short takes and night meetings tends to leave ambitious reporters hungry for something more substantive. "If you expect to get yourself out of Neighbors, you ought to be making a concerted effort to contribute to other sections of the newspaper, which means you need a lot of time," says Lawrence Josephs, a former Neighbors reporter who left the *The Miami Herald* in the summer of 1984 and is now free-lancing in New York. "And I'd say the attitude toward that situation is schizophrenic at best."

Josephs says that the rotations out of Neighbors are sporadic and arbitrary, and that reporters often find it difficult

to please their suburban and downtown editors at the same time.

Neighbors editor Larry Meyer replies that while "other things count," advancement and evaluations for suburban reporters are "based on the job they do for Neighbors."

At *The Providence Journal* and *The Evening Bulletin*, where the suburban staff is larger (about forty-five) than the metro staff (about thirty-five), a reporter may please his bureau manager with his coverage of the local chicken-dinner circuit, but the path downtown is generally through the Sunday pages. *Journal* editors frequently free up suburban reporters for special projects, taking them "off staff" from their far-flung outposts for weeks or months if necessary.

According to Robert Rawitch, the same is true at the *Los Angeles Times*. "We're looking for [suburban] reporters to do challenging stories within their environment," he says. "We're not having people grind out two and three stories a day. Most of my reporters are doing a couple of stories a week, and when they've got a really good story they may go and spend two or three weeks doing nothing but the one story. If we were going to hire people to have them write six-paragraph shorts, I think we would be misusing the talent, and I expect we would have a morale problem." Of course, Rawitch adds, a yearly salary "in the \$40,000 range" helps keep a lid on complaints.

Moving suburban reporters through the ranks has its advantages over importing seasoned pros from other papers, Rawitch says. "There are a lot of things about a reporter from the outside that you can never be entirely sure of: how much was the person edited, how well did they meet deadlines, how much of what you see in the clips were their own ideas. Those are all things that we can see in suburban, and then take the best people for metro."

To most experienced reporters, starting over in the suburbs may seem like a step down, but nowadays it is a step many think they must take to get ahead. "It's a kind of career crossroads decision," says Tom Coakley, a general-assignment reporter at *The Sacramento Bee*. "And once you get a certain number of years in the business, it is the basic decision." ■

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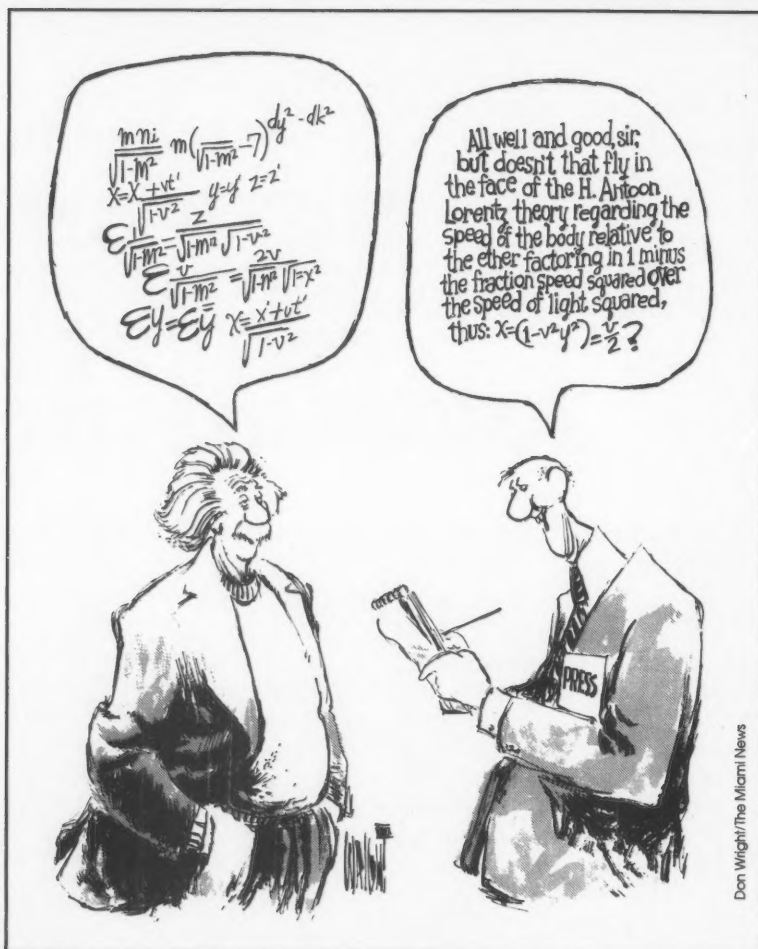
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The computer magazines' puffery problem

Even 'vaporware' — products that may never reach the market — can get rave reviews

by GAIL POOL
and MICHAEL COMENDUL

In the spring of 1984, *Byte*, a magazine for microcomputer users, published "A Call for Ethical Standards for Personal Computer Magazines." The call came none too soon. In a field where computer companies help develop "independent" magazines, where press releases about new products are often synonymous with news, and where magazines sometimes run articles about products that don't exist, it seems fair to say that the ethical operating system could use a debugging.

Byte's "Call For Ethical Standards" was part of its own ethical housecleaning. Like most of the more than 100 magazines of the genre, *Byte* is a service publication, delivering product reviews and information on developments in the computer field. At ten, it is the oldest of the consumer magazines dealing with personal computers, one of the most respected and most lucrative. In 1983, when the top ten computer magazines ran a total of 25,000 ad pages worth more than \$100 million, *Byte*, a McGraw-Hill publication, led the field in total revenues. That same year, angry readers accused the magazine of letting manufacturers write about their own products, and Philip Lemmons, who was then managing editor (he is now editor-in-chief), admitted that the charge was true. "*Byte*," he wrote, had been "...

Gail Pool, a writer and editor living in Brookline, Massachusetts, writes frequently about magazines. Michael Comendul, a freelance writer who lives in Manchester, New Hampshire, has edited a number of computer publications.

guilty of insufficient editorial zeal in purging promotional material from certain articles."

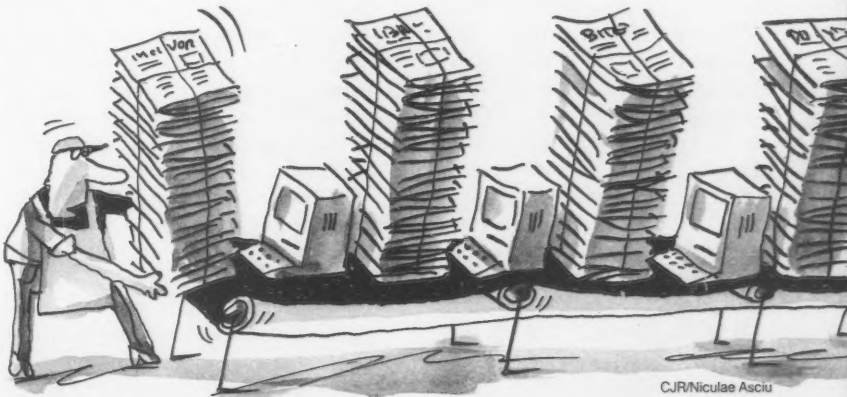
In a pair of editorials, Lemmons undertook to set *Byte's* house in order by clarifying its ethical policies and practices: no discounts for editors on "hot new computers," no articles by writers who own stock in the companies they are writing about, no editorial favoritism for advertisers. In sum, *Byte's* primary allegiance was to its readers, not to advertisers or the trade.

Computer companies are understandably eager for favorable editorial coverage. As *High Technology* has pointed out, a single ad is easily lost in the hundreds of ads that fill these thick magazines. (*Byte*, for example, carried 4,330 pages of advertising in 1983; its November issue ran to a record 720 pages.) Reviews and articles not only stand out; they also have editorial credibility. The effectiveness of reviews was suggested earlier this year in a *Wall Street Journal* technology column by Ron Winslow, who reported that one manufacturer's ad in an IBM computer trade journal had drawn 100 responses, whereas a review of the advertised product in a second journal had drawn 900. Small wonder that p.r. agencies for computer companies not only flood the magazines with press releases — Lemmons estimates

that *Byte* receives 2,400 to 3,000 new-product releases a month — but also, as reported in the computer press itself, try to plant and even write articles.

If companies seek to use magazines for their own marketing plans, magazines, often with an eye on future ads, frequently appear to cooperate. Many publications are filled with upbeat, generally favorable reviews. *Personal Computing* for July, for example, reviewed four products: an "impressive" lap-top computer, a "superb" word-processing program, a modem for beginners that is "right . . . for you," and a spread-sheet program that is without apparent fault. This September's *Computer Buyer's Guide and Handbook* carried reviews of more than thirty computers. It gave the Canon Personal Computer A-200 an "unqualified yes" for purchase, judged the NCR Model 4 "rugged and dependable . . . a computer that grows on you," said that Sanyo, in its MBC-775, had "come up with a winner," asserted that the Hewlett-Packard Touch-Screen PC "sets a new standard by which other computers will be judged," and so on. In fact, although most of the reviews contained some criticism, the overall conclusion in almost every instance was favorable.

How far from the truth such heavy-praise reviewing may be sometimes becomes embarrassingly clear. *Popular*



Computing, for example, devoted its July 1984 cover story to *Ovation*, a business software package from Ovation Technologies. The article, "Ovation Arrives," stopped just short of calling the product revolutionary. In the final paragraph, the author wrote, almost as if the product were not only available but already successful, "The company garnered over \$6 million in venture capital before its product hit the market — quite an endorsement in itself."

As it happens, *Ovation* did not hit the market. The product was never released. *Ovation*, it turned out, had never been fully developed, and was left to the annals of what is called in the trade "vaporware," high-tech dreams that do not always become a reality.

Instances of vaporware reviews are not uncommon in the computer press. Many companies engage in pre-release promotion, publicizing products that are still in fact only ideas, in hope of deterring the purchase — or even perhaps the development — of competitive products. Magazines, whether they are eager for a scoop or bent on cultivating a future advertiser, may write up products which, like *Ovation*, never make it to the market.

"With twenty-twenty hindsight," says Tom McMillan, associate editor of *Popular Computing* and the author of "Ovation Arrives," "the only way that I might have had a clue at that point that the product was in trouble would be if I had spent more time with the technical-development team and less time with the top people in the company, who were marketing-oriented. It was a smoke-screen that I didn't get to see through."

James E. Fawcette, until recently editorial director/associate publisher of *InfoWorld*, faults computer publications generally (including *InfoWorld*) for failing to expose the kinds of problems that plagued *Ovation*. Specifically, he lays the blame on writers who fail to assess the challenges involved in developing a particular product or who misjudge a company's ability to meet those challenges. He thinks it may be impossible to find writers with the technical and journalistic skills needed to cover all facets of the microcomputer industry.

John C. Dvorak, a columnist for *InfoWorld*, believes that the naiveté of reporters leads not only to vaporware re-

ports but to overly favorable coverage in general. "I don't think the field is mature enough when p.r. guys can go to a junior reporter and completely snow him or her and get the kind of press they want," says Dvorak. Citing Apple Computer's "event marketing" of new products at packed press conferences, Dvorak says, "Journalists do just what Apple wants them to do — write the product up and promote the hell out of it."

If the line between journalism and puffery can be blurred in magazines like *Popular Computing* and *Byte*, the likelihood of a magazine falling prey to marketing schemes is still greater in the case of the system-specific magazines, which have come to dominate the market in recent years.

System-specific, or machine-specific, magazines are those which are editorially dedicated to a single computer or to the products of a single company — A+ for Apple, *80 Micro* for the TRS-80, *Macworld* for the Macintosh. Profitable and useful, these magazines today account for nearly half of the existing titles, while about one out of six covers the computer field as a whole. (The remaining publications aim at more specialized audiences, such as teachers or accountants, but they are not system-specific.)

Technically, most system-specific magazines are independent of the companies whose products they write about. Some assert their independence in their titles: *PC: The Independent Guide to IBM Personal Computers*, for example, or A+: *The Independent Guide to Apple Computing*. But the question remains: Can they be entirely unbiased?

Magazines dedicated to a single computer, such as the Macintosh, are intended for people who already own one, and for the magazine to knock the machine, or to negatively review most of the software developed for it, is to tell the reader he made an expensive mistake — hardly a way to increase circulation. Magazines that review different product lines of a single company, such as Digital Equipment Corporation or IBM, are perhaps freer to knock an individual product. But for both types of magazine, inherent conflicts of interest exist. For one thing, the company is usually a prime advertiser. For another, the better

the computer company does, the better the magazine does; if a company fails or a particular computer proves a marketing failure (as did IBM's PCjr last year), their supporting publications are almost certain to fold (as did the PCjr magazines published by Ziff-Davis, CW Communications, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, and ABC Publications). This is not to say that machine-specific magazines are invariably uncritical; some do publish tough reviews. But the interlocking fates of magazine and company may easily compromise a magazine's integrity.

The situation, for example, is fragile at *80 Micro*, a CW Communications magazine that covers only Tandy computers and computer-related products. Encroachment by IBM and its emulators has decimated Tandy's market share and, with it, *80 Micro*'s advertising and, to a lesser extent, its circulation base. Apparently, editorial objectivity is in danger of being decimated too. "In the last year, our management has been very explicit about our mandate to promote the TRS 80 industry," says *80 Micro*'s editor-in-chief, Eric Maloney. "One person in the company said, 'If Tandy can't promote itself, we'll promote Tandy for them.'"

Maloney feels that to follow such a mandate would cost the magazine its integrity and credibility. Indeed, the line between a system-specific magazine and a house organ is easily blurred, especially when a computer manufacturer actively helps develop the magazine, an increasing trend in the field. Take *Macworld*, for example. Devoted exclusively to Apple Computer's Macintosh, it is published by David Bunnell (who also publishes *PC World* for the IBM PC). From the "Macworld View" to the "Macworld Gallery" to the "Macworld Directory," the magazine is a celebration of the Macintosh — what you can do with it, what you can buy for it, why you're glad you have it.

Macworld is technically an independent publication, as the fine print beside the masthead makes clear. But Apple worked closely with the *Macworld* staff in developing the magazine. Steven P. Jobs, Apple's chairman of the board, started talking about a magazine with Bunnell in May 1983, six months before the Macintosh was ready for the market. Jobs shared information about the price



of the machine, the date of its availability, Apple's marketing plans. He gave Bunnell some Macintoshes to work with. Waiving the secrecy usual in such situations, Jobs allowed Bunnell to contact software houses that were developing programs for the machine, thus helping him establish his future advertising base. Apple Computer also inserts a subscription card for *Macworld* in every Macintosh carton, offering two free issues of the magazine, thus helping Bunnell establish his circulation base.

"We came out with the first issue on the day they announced the computer," says Bunnell, who credits Apple Computer with his magazine's success. "One of the reasons we're successful is that we have been able to capture a much larger percentage of the installed base" — that is, of the total number of Macintosh owners.

To whom does *Macworld* owe primary allegiance: to the consumer? to Apple? Bunnell insists that his publications are completely independent of their associated companies. But the trend in the field is toward more and more explicit linkups between magazines and companies. *Amigaworld*, for example, has been geared to the release of the new Commodore Amiga microcomputer. The magazine will be put out by CW Communications of Peterborough, New Hampshire, but its first three bimonthly issues will be financed by Commodore International, which has final approval

of all editorial material and art. CW, for its part, has "exclusive access to all forthcoming Amiga owners," that is, CW will have the right to Commodore's warranty list of owners, vital to the magazine's circulation growth.

In yet another variation of the company/magazine connection, Lotus Development Corporation has simply started its own publication. A creator of business software best known for its enormously successful "1-2-3" software package, the company has established Lotus Publishing, an independent subsidiary, to bring out a magazine called *Lotus*.

Interestingly, *Lotus* is not a Lotus-specific publication. Though the magazine is essentially a user's guide to Lotus products and updates, the corporation calls it a business magazine, and it is subtitled "Computing For Managers and Professionals." *Lotus Magazine* will review hardware and software products and cover micro-industry trends.

Still more interestingly, though both the magazine's publisher and its editor remain vice-presidents and stockholders of the parent company, publisher Daniel A. McMillan sees no credibility problems for his magazine, which, he says, will not review Lotus products or those which directly compete with them. Regarding the magazine's relationship with Lotus Development, McMillan says: "As far as the p.r., advertising, and communications people [of Lotus De-

velopment are concerned], we are just another magazine." And regarding his consumer audience: "Independence is something that you earn by playing honest with the readers. It hasn't got anything to do with who owns you."

But other computer and software companies are unlikely to take kindly to having their products reviewed by people who are, in effect, being paid by Lotus Development. The Lotus setup is something like Scribners Publishing Company starting its own book review, Ford Motor Company coming out with a magazine called *Automotive Week*, or NBC publishing *TV Time*. Clearly, there is plenty of potential for conflicts of interest for a publication like *Lotus*.

In his *Byte* editorial on computer magazines, Philip Lemmons noted that ethical policies comprise "yet another area in which this young industry lacks standards." Looking over the field, it is hard to disagree. The question is whether, as the industry matures, such standards are likely to be developed. Just now, as the computer industry slumps and computer magazines endure a shake-out, the pressure on editors to use their publications as marketing tools isn't likely to diminish. Some magazines will acknowledge company ties, others will deny them or claim they can ignore them. But unless these magazines stand clear of such ties, readers will be unable to distinguish the signal from the noise. ■

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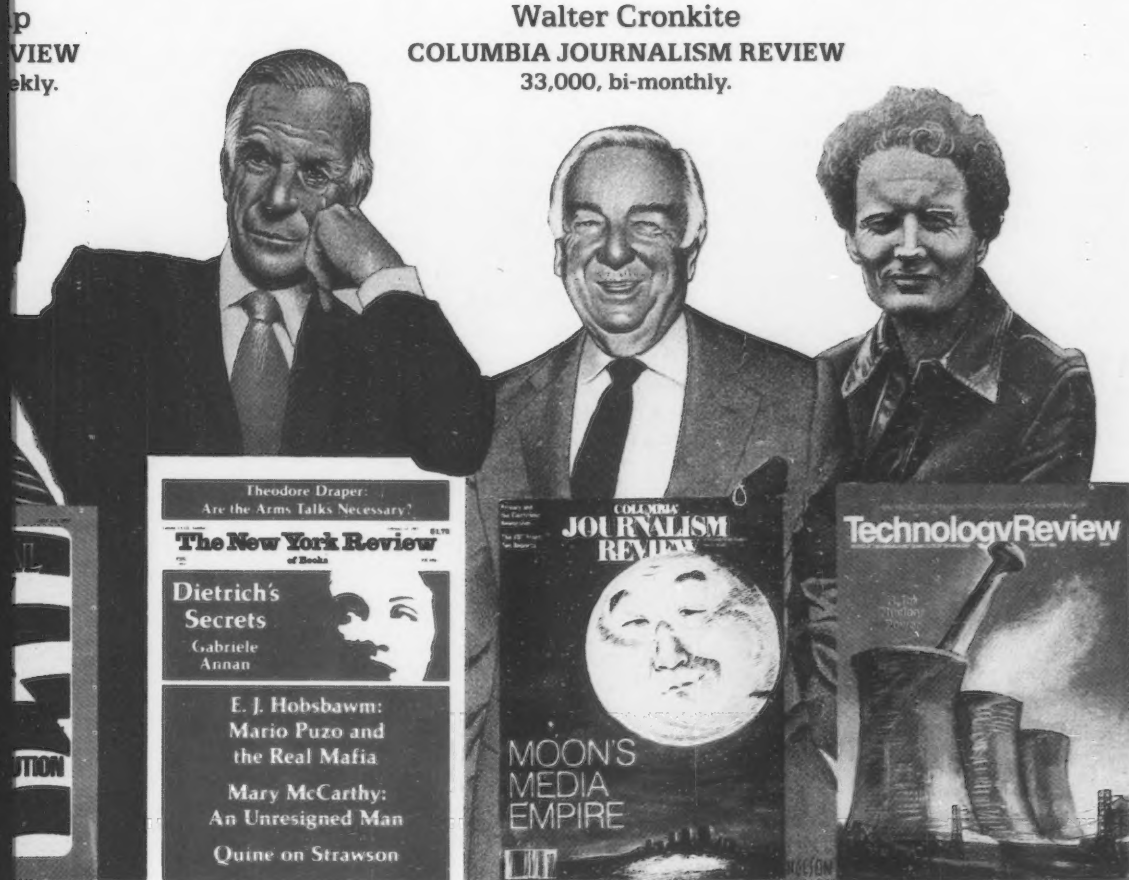
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Ralph McAllister Ingersoll, who died last March at eighty-four, would rate by anyone's definition as a mover and shaker in the annals of American journalism. Before reaching forty, Ingersoll served as managing editor of *The New Yorker* magazine in its earliest days, leaving it in 1930 to become managing editor of *Fortune*, a pioneering job he did so well that Henry Robinson Luce promoted him to general manager for all of Time Inc. From that executive perch Ingersoll helped create and launch yet another spectacular publishing innovation, the picture magazine *Life*.

No wonder that in 1937 Luce took his wunderkind out to lunch at the Ritz Carlton Hotel and offered him a million dollars in Time Inc. stock if Ingersoll would sign on to do his thing for another five years. Ingersoll, at the ripe age of thirty-six, turned down the offer, although he agreed to stay on for a while at \$45,000 a year (a handsome sum at that time; Luce was paying himself \$50,000).

The reason Ingersoll declined a long-term commitment was that he was possessed by the dream of starting his own daily newspaper — one that would break with stuffy traditions and synthesize everything he had learned about writing, editing, presenting, and interpreting news. The dream became a fleeting reality when the newspaper *PM* hit the streets of New York City (even though the *Daily News* successfully pressured some newsstands not to sell it) on June 18, 1940. A crusading newspaper that would transcend the limits of conven-

tional journalism, *PM* was perhaps the most original and exciting idea for a daily paper up to then and for the forty-five years since. (*USA Today*, while unfettered by a point of view about anything, is somewhat derivative.)

With the passage of the years the memory of *PM* has been tarnished by ideologues who would have past and present generations believe that this brash, imaginative, investigative daily was just a leftist rag done in by a communist conspiracy within the American Newspaper Guild. Such nonsense is contradicted in this biography by Roy Hoopes, a free-lance journalist who was granted personal, heart-to-heart interviews with Ingersoll and access to all his private papers.

Ingersoll gave up on publishing his own autobiography after one volume (which ended with the *New Yorker* years). Sequels covering his years with Luce and the launching of *PM* were rejected by publishers, partly because of his abrasive way of dealing with human beings still alive. And although Ingersoll's personal charm was considerable — as evident in his love affairs with such formidable women as Lillian Hellman and Laura Z. Hobson — the dark underside that helped to wreck these liaisons eroded his capacity to write sensitively about himself.

The Hoopes book is painful to read when it looks through the peepholes at Ingersoll's wars with himself as well as with others. But the publishing side of his adventures, encompassing a golden age in periodical innovations, makes the book well worth reading, especially for the more or less neglected history of *PM*.

A tall, slender man with bulging eyes and a Guardsman mustache, Ingersoll used to pace the office in shirtsleeves and bright suspenders, dictating copy at a breakneck pace. His dramatic, breath-



Ralph Ingersoll

less prose was just right for reporting a running story like the crucial air battle over Britain, which he assigned to himself a few months after *PM* was launched. At a time when this country had not yet committed itself to the struggle against Hitler, Ingersoll's eyewitness dispatches appeared in every issue of *PM* from November 18 through December 9, 1940. *PM* backed the Western Allies to the hilt during the period when the Soviet Union was still bound by the neutrality pact Stalin had signed with Hitler, and when American Communists were vociferously opposed to any U.S. aid for Hitler's opponents. The paper endorsed FDR for reelection in 1940. So much for the redbaiters' thesis, which finds little support from any copy ever printed in the paper.

To a respect for the writer's craft and a strong streak of self-confidence in his editorial judgment, Ingersoll brought a phenomenal talent for the sparking and promotion of ideas. On the strength of these ideas he rounded up \$1.5 million from the likes of Sears, Roebuck heiress Marion Stern, Wall Street investment banker John Loeb, Chicago department-store heir Marshall Field 3rd, adman Chester Bowles, chewing-gum manufacturer Philip Wrigley, and Standard Oil heir John Hay Whitney. Not exactly a collection of bomb-throwers. He whetted their appetites with visions of surefire success.

All the raw materials were at hand "to give you each day the clear, cogent, ex-

Penn Kimball, a professor at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, was a member of PM's original staff.

citing and amusing picture of the news," the prospectus announced. By eliminating advertising, the projected paper would supposedly free its writers and editors from the crass pressures of the marketplace. The paper would departmentalize the news along the lines of *Time*, but would add new departments to cover such traditionally neglected fields as labor and consumer news. It would assemble a corps of top photographers and give their work ample exposure on paper specially treated for superior reproduction. Reporters would write their own headlines to forestall distortion of their findings and also their own editorials to run alongside their news stories. Artists and mapmakers would illustrate the news whenever graphics could tell it better, often in a second color.

The new kind of newspaper would emphasize services to readers that conventional papers downplayed for fear of antagonizing advertisers (comparative shopping and consumer reports), and would give away space — for example,

neighborhood movie listings and radio program schedules — that other papers hoped to sell. (Actually, when *PM* came out, many papers were still omitting radio listings entirely, on the ground they might be promoting a rival medium competing for advertising dollars.)

PM would be packaged in tabloid size, its pages stapled together for convenient handling in the city's subways, and sell on weekdays for a nickel (the competition was charging pennies) and on Sundays for a dime. It was calculated to break even at a circulation of 200,000, although Ingersoll's prospectus to potential stockholders mentioned the eventual possibility of five million buyers.

The editorial slant of the new tabloid, as defined in advance, could be described as noble but vague. A graduate of Hotchkiss and Yale, a descendant of Ward McAllister (who created a famed list of 400 socially acceptable New York families), a man on a first-name basis with many of the nation's corporate heads, Ralph Ingersoll set forth an editorial credo that appealed to the decent

streak in caring Americans:

We are against people who push other people around in this country or abroad. We are against fraud and deceit and greed and cruelty and we shall expose their practitioners. We respect intelligence, honesty and sound accomplishment, religious tolerance. We propose to crusade for those who seek constructively to improve the way men live together.

Approximately 10,000 starry-eyed journalists from all over the country applied for jobs on a venture they would never forgive themselves for missing.

How could such a well-meaning, imaginative enterprise fail to succeed? Ingersoll, Hoopes writes, "launched perhaps the most exciting newspaper in the history of journalism." It sold 450,000 copies that first day in June, and an exultant Ingersoll leaped onto a desk in the city room to share his euphoria with the staff. In the excitement, no copies were delivered to the 150,000 charter subscribers, whom *PM* had spent \$300,000 to acquire. Worse, when In-



gersoll sought to make amends he discovered that the charter subscription list had disappeared.

Within three months the circulation was down to 30,000 and the paper was on the verge of bankruptcy; in September 1940 Marshall Field 3rd bought out the other stockholders for twenty cents on the dollar. The paper carried on until 1949, but it never fulfilled its promise. The fate of *PM*, like so many other liberal causes, illustrated the hard truth that it takes more than good intentions to make noble ideas work.

Hoopes toys with the line that Stalinists from the ideological battleground in New York City wanted to rule or ruin the new entry in the communications field. When *PM* began to falter, rumors to discredit it flew like vultures swooping over a decaying carcass. Hoopes sums up a memorandum Ingersoll felt compelled to write to his stockholders:

In short, said Ingersoll, the intent of the rumors was to discredit *PM* and the attacks were coming from three sources, all desiring to see *PM* disappear: (1) the Christian Front; (2) the Red-baiting Left — ex-Communists

and professional anti-Communists who, said Ingersoll, hated Communist sympathizers even more than they hated Communists . . . and (3) the circulation departments of other newspapers, certain rumors [having] been traced specifically to Roy Howard, publisher of the *World-Telegram*.

The real reasons for failure were distressingly mundane. Ingersoll grossly underestimated the number of street reporters required to score news breakthroughs in a city the size of New York, in a country the size of the United States, and in a world engulfed in planetary war. The Associated Press, yet to be challenged for monopoly practices in the courts, refused to sell *PM* its wire service. *PM*, conceived of as a progressive new voice on the domestic scene, had not a single foreign correspondent on its staff when publication day coincided with Wehrmacht tanks rolling into Paris.

The paper was undercapitalized at \$1.5 million, a huge slice of which was dissipated in prepublication promotion. Expectations inflated to astronomical heights could not help but be disap-

pointed by a product rushed into print before it was ready. Although Ingersoll managed small infusions of new capital from his succoring angel, Marshall Field 3rd, there never was sufficient margin to work out the bugs.

It was a miracle perhaps that *PM* managed to do so many wonderful things for as long as it did. "It covered labor (by Leo Huberman and James Wechsler), the press (by Hodding Carter), radio (by John T. McManus) and movies (by Cecelia Ager) as they had never been covered before," Hoopes writes. "The sports section, edited by Joe Cumiskey and featuring Tom Meany and Tom O'Reilly, was superb and, with the living section, was perhaps *PM*'s most enduring achievement. In fact, the living section under Elizabeth Hawes and the consumer news were not equaled, in most papers, until the 1970s, by which time, incidentally, most of *PM*'s innovations had become common practice in the newspaper business."

Ingersoll went off to World War II and wrote several best-sellers on his experiences. When, following his postwar return, Field decided in 1946 to cut losses by accepting advertising, Ingersoll quit the paper of his dreams. The rest of his life he spent making gobs of money buying and publishing a string of generally undistinguished newspapers with a cold, hard eye on the bottom line, ending his days in a sordid squabble with his son over control of his company.

The Ingersoll revealed in Hoopes's biography, written just before Ingersoll's death, was a self-indulgent, arrogant individual who in his prime drank too much, womanized too much, schemed too much in office politics, and during his most successful years spent many hours on the analyst's couch. That might be instructive to journalists who need to learn that private peccadilloes often have no relevance to public performance. Nevertheless, his epitaph might better have been written before he lost his magical editorial touch. By conventional standards, Ingersoll's dream newspaper ended in failure, albeit one that I.F. Stone called "a gallant defeat, more glorious than a victory because it was something original, courageous and different."

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Subterranean news

Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press
by Abe Peck

Pantheon. 365 pp. \$12.95

by PAUL COWAN

Do you remember when Fred Hampton was shot in Chicago? When the Weather Underground helped Timothy Leary break out of jail? Do you remember the violent days of rage in Chicago? The watershed moment when a group of feminists took over the *Rat*?

Chances are that if you were one of the two million Americans who read one of the 500 underground newspapers that flourished in the late sixties and early seventies these stories, nearly forgotten now, were at the forefront of your consciousness. For they were all front-page news in papers like Atlanta's *Great*

Paul Cowan, the author of An Orphan in History, is a staff writer for The Village Voice.

Speckled Bird or the *Berkeley Barb* or *Rising Up Angry* in Chicago or the *Old Mole* in Cambridge. These papers, whose history Abe Peck chronicles in his masterful book *Uncovering the Sixties*, were an outgrowth of the New Left's disappointment with the mainstream press. Did *The New York Times* or the *Chicago Tribune* or *The Boston Globe* fail to emphasize American atrocities in Vietnam or the jailing of Black Panther leader Huey Newton or the origins of the women's movement? Did such publications seem to ignore the mass actions that were organized to fight injustice? Then men and women like Abe Peck — Americans in their teens and twenties, most of whom had not intended to be reporters — would create a press of their own.

They produced propaganda and polemics and screaming graphics, not news analysis or reportage. Indeed, as Peck points out, they seldom bothered to interview people whose opinions differed from their own. Instead, they wrote a prose that was filled with the same molten rage that characterized the huge dem-

onstrations and smaller disruptive actions that now provide the visual images for the state of mind we call the Sixties.

Uncovering the Sixties provides a particularly valuable description of that time because Peck, once the editor of the Chicago underground paper the *Seed* and now a professor of journalism at the Medill School at Northwestern University, is able to recapture the strong emotions of those days in the tranquillity of these. With great skill, he has managed to create a seamless narrative out of the New Left and its frenzied mood, underground papers and their special problems, and his own experiences as an activist and journalist. His book should be required reading for veterans of that period who have managed to suppress the memory of the desperation we felt every morning when we woke up thinking about American planes napalming children in Vietnam — and believing, as Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver had said, that if we weren't part of the solution then we were part of the problem. And *Uncovering the Sixties* should

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be required reading for today's journalism students as well, who need to focus on the difficult, far-reaching issue the book raises: the relationship between propaganda — which might bring about desirable political effects — and unwelcome truth.

Uncovering the Sixties helped me understand my own history more clearly. For Peck — by focusing on the underground press — clarifies the difference between reporters like those on Chicago's *Seed* and my colleagues and me on such publications as *The Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone*. Both groups identified with the New Left movement. Both were inclined to withhold politically painful truths as often as we told them. But, looking back now, it seems clear that we were shaped by our publications and our editors in crucially different ways.



Peck's description of the role he played during the 1968 Democratic convention is a key to that difference. Just a year earlier, he had been an insurance salesman in Chicago, with a hatred for the war and a desire to make his life more interesting. In the fall of 1967, he and some friends drove to the Pentagon demonstration in Washington, D.C. Soon after, he quit his job and went to work for the *Seed*.

In the winter of 1968, Jerry Rubin — then a Yippie (a member of the flam-



boyantly radical Youth International Party) — came to Chicago to discuss the demonstrations that he and his allies were planning to hold during the Democratic convention. Peck recalls that while Rubin insisted that the event would be "an international festival of youth," "a celebration," what he really wanted was a confrontation with the police. Nevertheless, Peck writes, "if [Rubin's] fingers were crossed, my arm wasn't twisted when I said I'd be the Yippies' man in Chicago."

By contrast, the *Voice* — the paper for which I wrote — had a wise, skeptical editor named Dan Wolf. He wanted his reporters to prowl beyond all accepted conventions — including the left's — so that we could find our own authentic voices. Thus, as Peck writes, *Voice* reporter Don McNeill, who had been injured by the police while he was covering a "Yip-In" at Grand Central Station — a rehearsal for the convention protest — was able to gain enough psychological distance from the Yippies to perceive their "gross incompetence." To him, the Yip-In was "a pointless confrontation in a box canyon," an augury of the civil war that would take place on Chicago's streets.

In those days, my attitudes were closer to Peck's than to McNeill's. I was one of four reporters covering the 1968 convention for the *Voice*, and I remember watching, amazed, as kids a year or two younger than me threw rocks and slabs of sidewalks at the police, hoping to provoke reprisals. I filed a story about that — and then asked Dan Wolf to kill

it when the police fought back against anyone who happened to be on the streets. In other words, the police riot seemed to me a far greater evil than the fact that some kids had wanted to provoke it. I didn't want my story to dilute that impression.

But I always felt badly about my decision. And over the next few years, I became convinced that Dan Wolf's unsparing commitment to the truth was also a means of self-preservation. You had to write in your own voice. You couldn't imagine some movement heavy — or some conventional editor — censoring your opinions with chillingly harsh words or with a blue pencil. In the end, you owed it to yourself and your readers to interview as broad a spectrum of people as possible and then to force yourself to write as honestly as you could.

Besides, the problem Peck sensed when he talked to Jerry Rubin — and which McNeill confronted so boldly when he described the Yip-In — grew more severe over the next few years. If you wrote for the underground press you were no longer just "the Yippies' man in Chicago." Even at the *Voice*, we were supposed to be "the movement's person in the media." And the movement seemed increasingly perplexing and diffuse. Every group that regarded itself as oppressed demanded a seat at the left-wing table. They were constituencies to be echoed, not organizations to be covered. And they all demanded uncritical representation in the underground press.

By 1975 that press, like the movement that had spawned it, had turned in upon



itself. As Peck shows, writers for papers like the *Seed* and the *Rat* added their new rage at their comrades to the rage they already felt at America. Indeed, one finishes *Uncovering the Sixties* with the feeling that the underground press, the product of a unique time, strangled on its own anger.

What is the legacy of that angry journalism? Peck takes a rosy view. "While I was writing this book, one front page of the *Chicago Tribune* covered the ERA, the European peace movement, and a gathering of eighty thousand anti-war folks at the Rose Bowl," he writes. "The stories didn't advocate those causes, but were fairer and more balanced than they might have appeared fifteen years ago."

I'm not sure that that is particularly the result of the underground press — though undeniably, as Peck shows in a fascinating afterword, many of the best of the underground journalists have gone on to do important and innovative work in the mainstream media. It seems to me, at least, that events of the sixties, the counterculture that shaped the consciousness of almost all younger reporters and editors, did more to change mass media attitudes than the specific newspapers Peck describes.

Actually, the issues raised in *Uncovering the Sixties* transcend any single movement. For the central tension in journalism has always been between information and conviction — or, to put it more baldly, between truth and propaganda. Sports reporters, war correspondents, political writers all feel it acutely. The tension — and articles and committees designed to deal with it — will persist as long as there is a free press.

The underground press could only have blossomed in a time like the sixties. During those years, Peck — and I, and many people like us — were forced to make an important decision. Looking deep inside ourselves, we discovered that our primary loyalty was to our information, our perceptions, and our readers — not to any ideology, not to any political group. In *Uncovering the Sixties*, Peck makes this tension the plot of an intellectual adventure story that will grip anyone who reads the book.

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Slick operators

The American House of Saud: The Secret Petrodollar Connection

by Steven Emerson
Franklin Watts. 450 pp. \$18.95

by SAUL FRIEDMAN

The ordeal of TWA Flight 847 was another reminder, if one were necessary, that journalism has provided the stage as well as some of the leading players for the larger drama of the Middle East. And for most of the years since the horrors of the Holocaust broke upon the world and provided the imperative for the creation of Israel, the Jewish state has been the surrounded, outnumbered, beleaguered hero of the drama.

But that has been changing, according to the polls, in part because of such highly covered events as Israel's war in Lebanon in 1982 and the Beirut hostage

Saul Friedman is an adjunct professor at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism and a special writer for Newsday.

crisis in the summer of 1985. Indeed, there is every indication that critical changes may be underway, however haltingly, in American attitudes towards the Israelis, in United States policies in the Middle East, and even in Israel itself, which may be undergoing its most serious identity crisis since the 1940s.

Steven Emerson's book is itself a reflection of these inchoate changes, for it lays much of the blame for them on the influence of the Saudi Arabian lobby in America. In this it is almost a companion book to one published a few months ago, *Double Vision*, by Ze'ev Chafets, a former Israeli information official who argues that the trend toward more "balanced" coverage of the Middle East, which is to say of the Arabs, may be traced to a corporate and press conspiracy (see Books, *CJR*, November/December 1984). All the more reason for the press to watch its step as it covers not only the large and stormy events but also the smaller squalls that may add up to climatic changes.

A small but sharp example of press carelessness was *The New York Times's*

apparently unthinking choice of an old friend of mine, Hoyt Purvis, a former newspaperman, to review Emerson's book on June 23. Purvis, who was critical of the book, was identified as "Director of the Fulbright Institute of International Relations, University of Arkansas."

That should have told the book review editor something, for J. William Fulbright, previously as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and now as a Washington attorney whose firm's clients have included Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, has long been critical of Israel.

The Purvis review was already in print when the *Times*, on the day it appeared, published on page two of its first section a confession of error, acknowledging that the book was critical of Fulbright and that Purvis had worked as press secretary to Fulbright from 1968 until 1974.

In a similar vein, Emerson correctly criticizes *Newsweek* for soliciting and printing comment on the Middle East from Fulbright in 1978 without mentioning his lawyer-client, "foreign

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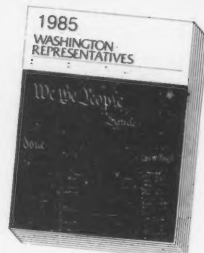
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agent" ties to the Saudis. Fulbright, who promoted the Saudi position in the piece, was identified only as a former senator who "practices law in Washington."

Emerson, a fine investigative reporter who spent several years working for a Senate subcommittee on foreign economic policy, has put together a thorough, excellent, even powerful account of the Saudi lobby as it operates here and elsewhere in the world. The late Senator Everett Dirksen used to say cynically that "money oils the political machine." Emerson documents the power of oil money in the manipulation not only of politicians, but also of diplomats, academics, lawyers, and, to a lesser extent, the media. He provides evidence that businessmen and lawyers beholden to Saudi money tend not to anger their angels. He draws a disturbing picture of universities so greedy for grant money that they risk compromising scholarship on Middle East studies. And he details the many friendships with reporters (including this one) cultivated by Washington attorney Fred Dutton, who is paid handsomely to represent Saudi

interests. The heart of Dutton's strategy, Emerson quotes *The Wall Street Journal* as saying, "is his recognition of the central role of the media in shaping foreign policy." Indeed, at *The Washington Post's* editorial meetings, one journalist told Emerson, "it's easy to tell who had brunch with Dutton the day before."

In one of the few but telling examples involving the American news media, Emerson recounts a 1981 incident in which a group of corporate executives on a tour of the Persian Gulf sponsored by Time Inc. decided, after briefings by American officials in Riyadh, to send a telex to the U.S. Senate in support of the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia. Although the Time hosts remained away from the deliberations of the corporate executives and did not sign the telex, Emerson's point is well taken: Time should not have put itself in such a compromising position by hosting the tour in the first place. But then, Time (like most large media organizations) has common cause with the corporate world. And corporation executives, in



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search of policies that mean profits, try to and often do wield influence on government decisions like the sale of the AWACS.

Emerson also describes in detail Saudi efforts in 1980 to bar from American television "Death of a Princess," a docudrama about the beheading of a Saudi princess for committing adultery. While the program did air around the country, some public television stations, in Texas and elsewhere, yielded shamelessly to Saudi-inspired corporate pressures. And one board member of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, retired Admiral Thomas Moorer, who also serves as a Texaco director, told Emerson he favored banning the program because "we just can't alienate our friends who have all this oil."

Emerson's detailed reporting on how the Saudis spend dozens of millions seeking a favorable image in America should win the admiration of journalists as well as general readers. And it is certainly useful to be made aware (as if we didn't know) that money talks (as one convicted Abscam congressman told FBI agents posing as Arabs), and that a lot of it is coming from the Saudis. But Emerson's argument falters when he suggests, as he does throughout the book, that Saudi money and influence are behind the views of those who are critical of Israel or of official U.S. policies toward Israel, or even behind the policies themselves. A case in point is the ad hominem leap that blames Fulbright's views on the money his clients pay: Fulbright's position on Israel was well known long before he became a private lawyer. (Incidentally, Emerson only glosses over the long and eventually successful campaign by Jewish organizations to unseat Fulbright, as they more recently unseated Charles Percy, who had been chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.)

Similarly, while *The New York Times*, at the very least, erred in not letting readers in on Purvis's association with someone who figured in the book, that does not mean Purvis's views are to be dismissed out of hand. He worked not only for Fulbright, but also for then Senate majority leader Robert Byrd, who was more friendly toward Israel.

Moreover, while it's one thing to say that money can corrupt, or that "prominent newspapers, universities, and television networks have become witting and unwitting vehicles . . . for the promotion of the Arab political agenda," it is quite another to conclude that support by the president and many members of Congress of the sale of AWACS and other arms to the Saudis represented a surrender to the Saudi lobby, or to American business, or even to the need to maintain the flow of Saudi oil. There are larger, more complex reasons than the influence of a lobby for a president's foreign policies.

Significantly, the Saudi money and the Saudi lobby and the Saudi manipulation notwithstanding, fundamental American policy in the Middle East, basic American support for Israel, longstanding American hostility towards the Palestine Liberation Organization, tacit American approval for Israel's Lebanon venture — none of this was affected by the Saudis when the oil weapon was powerful.

In the wake of recent events, however, Israel is politically and economically paralyzed and searching for new policies. And the irony that finds the United States looking at Syria as a possible Middle East ally is but one sign that America too is nearing a policy crossroads. It does a disservice to Israel to ignore that reality while blaming possible changes on a monied lobby or on a press that succumbs to its blandishments.

The scoop on Rupe

Arrogant Aussie:

The Rupert Murdoch Story

by Michael Leapman

Lyle Stuart Inc. 288 pp. \$14.95

by MARK HERTSGAARD

Rupert Murdoch may be the best argument there is for tightening U.S. citizenship laws. The Australian media mogul cannot complete his latest lunge of expansion, purchase of the Metro-media television network, unless he be-

Mark Hertsgaard is an associate fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C.

comes a bona fide American. Unfortunately, the immigration officials who will rule on Murdoch's application will probably not read Michael Leapman's appropriately titled biography *Arrogant Aussie*. But America's journalists should.

Murdoch did not cooperate with Leapman, apparently preferring to bless another writer's forthcoming biography over which, Leapman reports, Murdoch will have editorial control. But Leapman claims to have interviewed 120 people who have known or worked with Murdoch, a task made easier by his having worked at two London papers, the *Sun* and the *Times*, in the years before Murdoch purchased them. The book is thus filled with gossip stories (usually unattributed, alas) recounting newsroom flaps, business meetings, transcontinental phone calls, and social gatherings. We watch as Murdoch sweet-talks journalist after journalist into working for him (even many who knew better found themselves charmed on first meeting him), sacks editors as easily and often as most men change shirts, and sniffs out and pounces on opportunities to buy media properties, often lying or double-crossing friends in the process. It's a sordid story, but a fun read.

Those who have followed Murdoch's career will find portions of the book familiar. Leapman draws on previously published accounts to describe Murdoch's various takeover battles, his role in the New York newspaper strike of 1978, and his suspicious lobbying for a U.S. Export-Import Bank loan in 1980. But he supplements this material with so many spicy quotes from interviews that even readers acquainted with the Murdoch saga will come across stories they have not heard.

Especially interesting are the accounts of Murdoch's early years (he flirted briefly with socialism while a student at Oxford, apparently more for social than ideological reasons) and of his later involvement in the 1975 ouster of Australia's Labour Government, headed by a former Murdoch favorite, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. Leapman also tells the story of what may be the only

public skewering Murdoch ever received, a live-television interrogation by David Frost concerning Murdoch's publication of some smutty memoirs of a British politician's call girl. And, finally, he makes clear the key tactic in Murdoch's aggressive business strategy: heavy bank borrowing. In January 1984 the \$400 million long-term debt of his News Corporation was almost equivalent to its shareholders' equity. Murdoch thereby keeps his firm under tight con-

trol, safe from unruly stockholders or outside predators.

Rupert Murdoch, as portrayed in *Arrogant Aussie*, is the personification of modern, multinational capitalism. His rapacious and unremitting quest to enter new markets appears to be rooted not so much in a lust for wealth, of which he already has mountains, as in an addiction to the process of expansion itself — the scheming, the excitement, the conquest, the sheer playing of the game.

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The care and feeding of readers

Goebbels & Gladys

by Keith Colquhoun

Academy Chicago. 188 pp. \$13.95

Published originally in Britain in 1981, this satiric novel by an editor of The Economist traces the moral journey of Fleet Street reporter Hedley Verity, an unabashed practitioner of "instinctive journalism" who rises superbly to the assignment, under the wildest of conditions, of a sensational four-part feature on the secret love life of Josef Goebbels, "the p.r. man with the most difficult client in the world." The passage below, slightly abridged, introduces narrator-hero Verity and prepares the way for the seriocomic adventures to come.

"Naturally, we are always glad to see a reader," I said to the man who had been ushered in and now sat opposite me. I used the editorial We feeling that it sounded less hypocritical than a purely personal welcome. Although I was not specifically glad to see him, it seemed reasonable that among the two thousand employees someone might be glad to see him, or would not actually object to seeing him. Someone in promotion and advertising might be very glad to see him.

"How long have you been reading the paper, Mr. Shilling?"

He said for thirty-two years.

"One mistake in thirty-two years," I said. "Not a bad record, I suppose. Not that I am excusing it, of course."

"I have found other mistakes."

"Ah."

"Little things, you know?"

"Spelling mistakes, that sort of thing?"

"Not spelling mistakes so much. I know you correct those. More emphasis of tone."

Where did he get that phrase?

"You mean we got it wrong, Mr. Shilling?"

A smile. "Well, I don't want to be rude."

"We do get things wrong. Bloody wrong. But we try not to."

We try not to be found out.

"But when we do make a mistake we say so."

If we have to. If we get a writ. Or a pompous rumble from the Press Council. Would Mr. Shilling go to a solicitor or write to the Press Council? I thought he would not. For a reader he didn't seem at all a bad lot. Most readers are prejudiced, ill-informed whiners and, from the evidence of their letters, on the borderline of illiteracy and a disgrace to the educational system. Their one function is to provide a few miserable pence to purchase a copy of a newspaper. In the end they failed even to do that, so causing the death of the *Daily Herald*, the *News Chronicle*, the *Daily Sketch*.

"Did you ever read the *Daily Herald*, Mr. Shilling?"

He did. I warmed marginally to him. On the *Herald* the editor used to say that the typical reader was someone he called the educated artisan, which I suppose was slightly more offensive than to say you disliked him. A thinking Labour voter, Left Book Club editions by the fireside, strong views on Ramsay Mac, rather earnest. Mr. Shilling was an educated artisan, a declining breed.

"It wasn't very good on bowls," he said. "I used to read the *Express* for the bowls."

"Yes," I said, although I could not immediately establish the connection.

"Like your paper." He handed me a cutting of the story he was complaining about. It was something to do with bowls.

"Mr. Shilling," I said, "would you like your photograph in the paper?"

So the following day we ran a little story in column eight of page three. The heading was: Mr. Shilling and the Search for Truth. There was a single-column portrait of Mr. Shilling. Then the copy read: "Watchmaker Harold Shilling admires accuracy. So do we. His is the world of mechanical precision. Ours is the world of precise facts. For more than thirty years we have been Mr.

Shilling's newspaper. He has never found us faulty. Provocative, yes. Outspoken, certainly. For that is our way. But faulty, no. Not until this week. Mr. Shilling came to see us to say that we had a mistake. In a reference to the fine game of bowls, which Mr. Shilling plays, we said that all woods are black and all have bias. Unbiasedly, we accept that we were wrong. Bowls come in diverse colours. The Chinese use white ones. The Germans use an unweighted wood. The meticulous Mr. Shilling is prepared to forgive us. He reckons that one mistake in thirty years is allowable. So do we. No one's perfect."

In the afternoon, Mr. Shilling phoned.

"I saw your write-up."

"I thought it came out well," I said incautiously, for no one phones up to say thank you.

"Yes, I suppose so. Funny way of doing it. No apology or anything."

"We said we were wrong. Rather honestly and directly, I thought."

"Oh yes, you said that."

"What did you think of your picture?"

"That was very good. You only had room for the one?"

"Obviously, we chose the best. But we will be sending you a selection of the poses taken, and they will be yours to keep. Without charge."

Mr. Shilling had not yet reached the point of his call. I was not going to help him. I held the phone at arm's length to pick up the sounds of the Big Room, the muted typewriters of the reporters, the sound of a creed machine as someone opened the tape-room door, the foreign editor talking loudly on the phone in a flat-accented French.

"Are you still there, Mr. Shilling? Where were we? You like the picture, but not the story, is that it?"

"I'm sure it's clever. But it's got a lot of mistakes in it, hasn't it?"

"Like what?"

"Well, I'm not a watchmaker, am I? I mend watches for a hobby."

"Come, Mr. Shilling, are you telling me you've never made a watch? Not one?"

"Not exactly made one."

"But every time you put all the bits

Reprinted courtesy of Academy Chicago.

back after mending the thing, that's as good as making it, surely? You've made it go."

"But in the newspaper you make it sound as though I am something special."

"You are special, Mr. Shilling. You mustn't be modest. And it's not going to hurt you that your friends read it and know it. Bring in some extra business. You'll be surprised."

"And then I haven't read your paper for thirty years. Not your paper alone."

"We didn't say that."

But we implied it.

"For years I didn't read anything at all. You moved the pages around and I couldn't find anything."

"With respect, Mr. Shilling, I think you are splitting hairs."

"And then I didn't say I had never found any mistakes over all those years. That makes me look very foolish. It's defamatory."

The educated artisan had used a chilling word.

"I really do think you are taking it a bit too seriously."

"Now let me see where I am." I visualized the loathsome Mr. Shilling fingering the story as he moved on to the next objectionable syllable. "Well, all the bowls stuff is ridiculous. I don't play myself. I follow the game. The Chinese don't use white ones. I don't know where that came from. And it's only in Bavaria that the Germans use an unbiassed type of wood."

There were several things I could do. I could hang up, hoping that Shilling would assume that we had been cut off accidentally and that he would let the whole matter slide. It didn't seem a good idea. I could put him on to the reporter who had interviewed Shilling and had written the monumentally dull piece that I had rewritten. But the reporter would only claim that his copy had been accurate. Accuracy was his only virtue. He was boringly accurate.

"Well," I said, "if what you say is true, and I am sure it is, I can only say I am sorry. I shall take steps to find out how this appalling catalogue of errors happened. Will you leave it with me?"

I tried to give the impression that I

was about to set up something equivalent to a Court of Inquiry, presided over by a judge from the Hacks Division of the Newspaper Supreme Court. Tomorrow I would write him a holding letter, perhaps something fuller in a week or two. But Mr. Shilling had a gluey persistence.

"You'll print an apology?"

"Let me make my inquiries, Mr. Shilling."

"You'd better read over to me what you are going to say, just so it's correct." He insisted on giving me his phone number. "And . . ."

"Yes?"

"I think, if it's all the same with you, I don't want my photograph in again."

"Yes, it's all the same with me."

I put the phone down. A correction correcting a correction was absurd. It did occasionally happen because a correction is as vulnerable as any other piece of copy. But it was profoundly undesirable. People would laugh at it. Newspapers hate being laughed at. I was disappointed in Mr. Shilling. I had treated him as a human being instead of as a reader, and he had exploited me. ■



CJP/Marc Simon

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Feline streak spotted

TO THE REVIEW:

Dart: to Tom McNichol and Margaret Carlson for writing, and to the *Review* for publishing, the following passage about Gloria Steinem, which appeared in "A Developer Remodels U.S. News" (CJR, July/August):

Gloria Steinem, squinting and looking slightly dazed, is also there. Zuckerman's senior in both publishing and age (she is fifty-one, he forty-seven), and taller, Steinem could steal some of the spotlight this night, but obviously prefers to keep a low profile. Whether out of deference or because she is not wearing her glasses, she trails behind Zuckerman all evening, holding on as if he were some kind of seeing-eye dog.

Color in a feature story is one thing. Malice is another. The comments about her age, her eyesight, and her attention to Zuckerman are all malicious. Or perhaps "catty" is the word.

GEORGE DUSHECK
Albion, Calif.

Hochstein contra Meeker

TO THE REVIEW:

Your July/August issue includes an article on the Newhouses ("Onward — and Upward? — with the Newhouse Boys") that in at least one aspect is grossly untrue. I refer to a description of the Newark *Star-Ledger* in the 1950s as "still fairly raunchy . . . regularly running cheesecake photos of women in skimpy bathing suits and feverishly backing the anticommunist campaigns of its hero, Senator Joseph McCarthy."

The authors of your article quote Richard Meeker's book on Newhouse. It is a fair guess that they relied on Meeker's comments on the *Star-Ledger*. I was the editor of the paper during that period, and I am now pursuing a \$5 million libel suit against Meeker and his publisher. Judge Leonard Cohen has ruled in favor of a motion by the defense to vacate the suit, but this is being appealed. In any event, the court did not rule on the truth or falsity of the issues I raise.

Whatever the outcome of the suit, there is an issue of truth and fairness that a journalism review should face. I invite scrutiny of the files of the *Star-Ledger* during the period of my editorship, which embraced all the decade cited. I dare anyone to find any "cheesecake" on the front page or any display of feminine nudity anywhere in the paper. This challenge also goes to the alleged treatment of Senator McCarthy as the paper's "hero."

PHILIP HOCHSTEIN
New York, N.Y.

The authors reply: *As Mr. Hochstein correctly assumes, the passage to which he takes exception was based on Mr. Meeker's well-documented characterization of the Star-Ledger in his Newspaperman: S.I. Newhouse and the Business of News.*

Mr. Meeker comments: *The basic source for my description of the Star-Ledger's editorial practices was the paper itself. I spent a good deal of time reviewing copies of the Star-*



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Ledger and quoted directly from it in News-
paperman. I also conducted lengthy inter-
views with former reporters.

*This was all part of an inquiry into the
larger question of the effect of Newhouse's
policies of editorial autonomy, not of Mr.
Hochstein's own abilities or performance. In
fact, Hochstein's name does not even appear
in the chapter of my book cited in the CJR
article.*

Kwitny contra Irvine

TO THE REVIEW:

I am sick and tired of Reed Irvine's being
allowed to spew his inaccuracies about me
without my being allowed comment. (Unfin-
ished Business, CJR, July/August). I realize
that CJR has merely joined a parade of dis-
tinguished (and undistinguished) publica-
tions in having printed this garbage without
offering me so much as a phone call, and my
general respect for your magazine is one
reason I write.

Most important: I am aware of no errors
— mine, Philip Agee's, or anyone else's —
either in the story I wrote about the State
Department's white paper on El Salvador that
appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, or in
the elaboration of the same material that ap-

peared in my book *Endless Enemies*. Nor
does Irvine cite any errors while filling your
columns with libelous generalizations.

When Agee raised the issue of plagiarism,
I did not even remember that a paper he wrote
was in the voluminous file I had assembled
on the white paper. Anthony Marro's reply
to Irvine covers me in part by noting that the
documents themselves (which I got a trans-
lator to translate) and the State Department's
admissions of errors in private interviews
with me provided the heart of the article.

Besides saying that I am a plagiarist, Philip
Agee also says that the CIA, in fact the whole
American military apparatus, is a conspiracy
against freedom and justice. Does Irvine also
agree with that? If Irvine will join me in the
belief that Agee says things that are pro-
foundly wrong, why does Irvine for years on
end raise the word of this man as proof that
I am a plagiarist and KGB dupe?

While I appreciate Marro's good intentions
in offering my defense, I would rather speak
for myself. Marro writes, "The point of
Kwitny's piece was not that the State De-
partment's claim that arms were being
shipped into El Salvador was in error, but
only that its 'evidence' was much less solid
than it first was made out to be."

Well, the State Department's claim was in

error, and, most likely, knowingly so. If not,
the claim would by now have been made on
better evidence. Obviously, weapons have
been carried into El Salvador from Soviet-
bloc sources, though probably far fewer than
have been carried in from Western sources.
But the point of the white paper was that
shipments of Soviet-bloc arms were so large
and well-orchestrated as to be responsible for
the guerrilla presence, making the war "a
textbook case" of Soviet-bloc aggression,
rather than an uprising of discontented Sal-
vadorans.

Not only do the "captured documents"
on which the white paper purportedly was
based fail to support this assertion, but
nothing I have seen or heard either in El
Salvador or here supports it either. By the
evidence, it simply isn't true, which I thought
was the point of Marro's piece ("When the
Government Tells Lies," CJR, March/April)
that started all this.

JONATHAN KWITNY
New York, N.Y.

Witness

TO THE REVIEW:

I read with special interest John Lancaster's
article about being an execution witness
("Witness to an Execution," CJR, July/Au-

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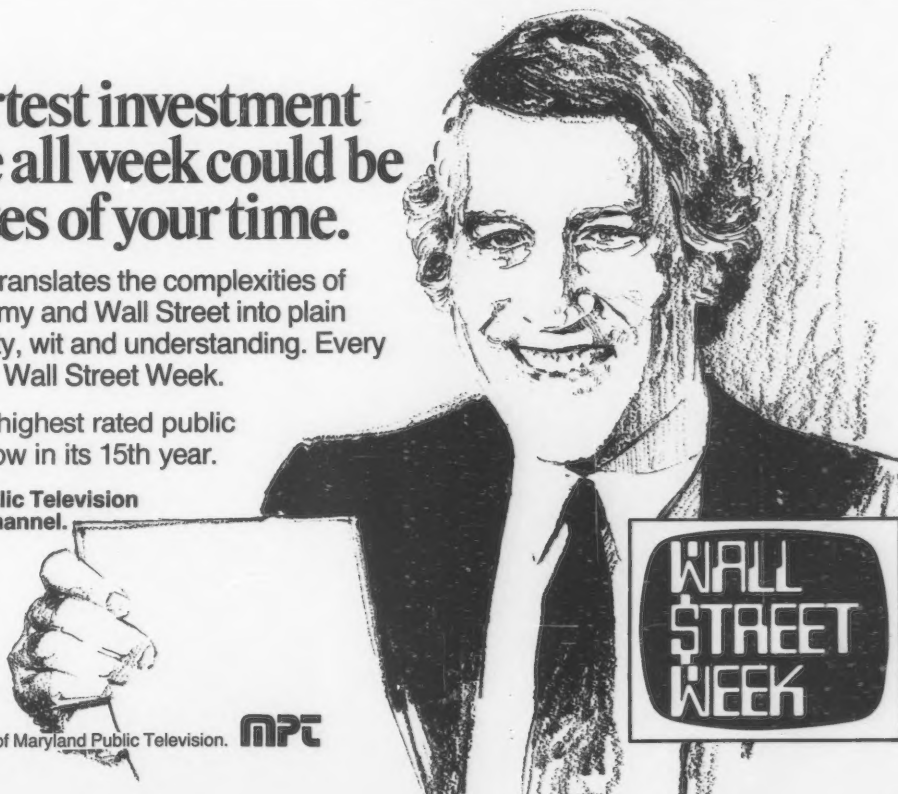
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gust) because I was a witness for UPI at Georgia's first modern execution (the killing of John Eldon Smith on December 16, 1983) and shared the misgivings Lancaster cited. As the UPI staffer in charge of our execution coverage at that time, I was a little disturbed by the reaction of press colleagues and personal friends, who shared my opposition to capital punishment, after I agreed to be a witness because I did not want to pass the unpleasant job along to either of the other two staffers assigned to the prison that day. Many of them were disappointed that the experience had not made me physically ill or emotionally distraught. It was almost as if I owed them a few sleepless nights. I explained that my opposition to capital punishment is based simply on the fact that it does not work — has never worked — in deterring crime. (I recently checked homicide figures for Florida, which now leads the nation in executions, and found no decline since executions were resumed there in 1979. Where is the deterrent value of capital punishment?) It seems most questioners are dissatisfied with any reason that does not involve sympathy for the condemned. Sorry.

Finally, what has happened to the execution story generically since Gary Gilmore volunteered to die in 1977 and John Spinkelink was unwillingly electrocuted in Florida in 1979? Where's the live network coverage and the breathless front-page eyewitness account? Was the first or second execution less justified (and thus more newsworthy) than the eleventh or twenty-first or thirtieth?

With the exception of Tom Wicker in *The New York Times* and very few others (notably *The New Republic* and strident death-penalty opponents writing in far-left journals), I see no continued questioning or coverage of the issue. Mostly, we get brief items from Virginia, Texas, or Florida that basically say, "Yep, they did it again." Television seems to have lost interest completely.

WILLIAM R. COTTERELL
Tallahassee, Fla.

Uh huh

TO THE REVIEW:

You were correct when mentioning WXEX-TV, Richmond, in the Darts and Laurels department (CJR, July/August). [The Dart was directed at several stations that aired a

"news video" promoting Doritos snack chips.] Yes, the food feature in question was used on our station. No, it was not used on a newscast. Rather this piece was used in *Good Morning Virginia*, a program that regularly uses light features like this. Does that deserve a dart?

H. JOSEPH LEWIN
General manager
WXEX-TV
Richmond, Va.

Ethical alternative

TO THE REVIEW:

Ethics, as "Those Newsroom Ethics Codes" (CJR, July/August) made clear, isn't a clear-cut virtue which a newspaper can guarantee by having an ironclad list of don'ts and can'ts. But your article didn't mention one very viable alternative to a written ethics code — disclosure. In other words, give readers the facts and let them decide if a conflict exists. Give readers credit for enough intelligence to decide for themselves whether a story is biased because of the reporter's (or editor's, or owner's) affiliations or relationships.

JUDITH ROALES
Vice-president
Independent Newspapers Inc.
Dover, Del.

Culpa nostra?

TO THE REVIEW:

Dart to CJR for the sarcastic language used in its Dart (CJR, July/August) to WBZ-TV, Boston, for canceling an appearance by two editors who had written a book on lesbian nuns.

While I admit that the incident is worth reporting, as a Catholic and a journalist I found your references to "kneeling" [to pressure from the Catholic Church] and "excommunication" [from WBZ's "People Are Talking" program] an example of snide anti-Catholicism which I do not expect to find in a magazine that professes "to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent."

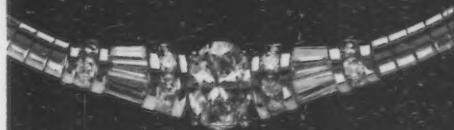
ROBERT GRIP
News anchor
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Whose News?

TO THE REVIEW:

Terri Schultz-Brooks's article on the New

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

York Daily News ("Daily News: Can New Team Rout Rupe?" CJR, May/June) was far too kind. As a longtime reader of the *News* and as a journalist, I would like to see the paper succeed. But in a city where about 40 percent of the population is nonwhite, the *News* seems determined to either avoid or alienate that audience.

Much is made in the article of James Hoge's new management team. I found it fascinating that not one key editor hired by the new regime was black or Hispanic. There is no black on the paper's editorial board and the *News* has only one black (and one Hispanic) columnist. Apparently, Mr. Hoge thinks he can capture that black middle-class audience without any input from members of that class.

The *News* has always had a close relationship with the New York Police Department. I found it fascinating that the first time the state's Freedom of Information Act was invoked by the *News* on a police matter, it was to get information about (black) Commissioner Benjamin Ward's after-hours activities in his previous job.

As many as one out of two black New Yorkers may be of Caribbean origin, yet the political and economic problems of the Caribbean are virtually ignored by the *News*. The annual West Indian Day parade, which

draws a million people, is covered briefly, except when there are reports of violence. The *News* has yet to demonstrate an awareness that blacks and Hispanics exist not as a pathological or political problem but as integral parts of the city. Shuffling blacks off into a Harlem section is an insult and a new form of journalistic apartheid.

The *News* has a long tradition as the (white) people's paper. I'd like to see it expand its vision to cover the full range of people who live in the city.

JOEL DREYFUSS
New York, N.Y.

Acknowledgment

"Pushing New Drugs — Can the Press Kick the Habit?" (CJR, July/August) should have carried the acknowledgment that the article was funded in part by the Kihn Memorial of the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

Deadline

The editors welcome letters from readers. To be considered for publication in the November/December issue, letters should be received by September 20. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

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T9J

The Lasting Imprint of People & Ideas

Frank Gannett did not make many mistakes in a rags-to-riches career that was the basis for one of the largest communications companies in the U.S. today.

So, too, when he established the Gannett Foundation, 50 years ago. Mr. Gannett created a broad charter for this independent foundation: To invest in people and ideas.

A Larger Framework

A 50th anniversary is an appropriate time for reflection. But the profile of the Gannett Foundation means much more as part of a larger framework: The contributions that foundations have made to all facets of American life.

In 1984, U.S. foundations made record gifts of \$4.36 billion. Still, they account for only 5.8 percent of all giving in the U.S. today.

Polio Vaccine, Public TV

What sets foundations apart is the fact that their limited assets—carefully and cautiously directed—can produce extraordinary results.

Foundations, for example, supported the people who developed the polio vaccine and discerned the secrets of DNA. Foundations financed our nation's free library



It was near his 59th birthday—September 15, 1935—when Frank Gannett set up his independent foundation. The first five grants totaled \$2,250. During the next 50 years, the foundation made gifts totaling more than \$125 million. The foundation celebrates its 50th anniversary and re-affirms the essential role for foundations, large and small—to invest in people and ideas.

system. They stimulated the creation of public television and "Sesame Street."

According to James Joseph, president of the Council on Foundations, "The telling thing about

foundations' work is that they are often more searching and more systematic than individuals who give. And, they can be more flexible and more venturesome than government agencies."

A Shared Vision

The Gannett Foundation shares that vision. In 1984, the foundation distributed \$13.2 million. Nearly half went to meet the needs of local people and programs in some 120 communities served by Gannett Co., Inc. communications enterprises.

Other foundation grants support national causes. To promote volunteerism, for example; and to reduce adult illiteracy.

Media-Related Programs

For a half-century, the Gannett Foundation has funded media-related programs. To improve the quality of journalism education and research. To protect press freedom. And to advance women and minorities in media management.

The Gannett Foundation celebrates its 50th anniversary and re-affirms the essential role for foundations, large and small: To discover and develop the nation's greatest natural resources—people and ideas.

Gannett Foundation

Lincoln Tower • Rochester, NY 14604

For more information: Council on Foundations, 1828 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20036

The Lower case



Experts: Body Josef Mengele

North Adams, Mass., Transcript 6/22/85

Morality rates lower than normal at Mobil

Woodbury, N.J., Gloucester County Times 6/10/85

President determined to have cancer

Richmond, Ky., Register 7/16/85

Parents ride school buses after death

Providence, R.I., Journal 5/22/85

Spain Accepts Computer Rule

The New York Times 7/5/85

Convict to marry stepdaughter he raped in unusual ceremony

Idaho Press-Tribune 7/19/85

Syria may take hostages today

Shreveport, La., Times 7/29/85

Garden Grove resident naive, foolish judge says

Orange County, Calif., Register 7/2/85

Large church plans collapse

Hamilton, Ont., Spectator 6/8/85

City, county, Union Pacific meet on radioactive soils

Las Vegas Sun 7/6/85

Fashions Shown to Fight Cancer

Century City, Calif., News 6/5/85

Nation's Economy A Mystery, Spaghetti Costlier

Winchester, Ind., News-Gazette 6/21/85

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